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KHUDA BAKHSH LIBRARY

KHUDA BAKHSH ORIENTAL
PUBLIC LIBRARY PATNA

Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library

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Foreword

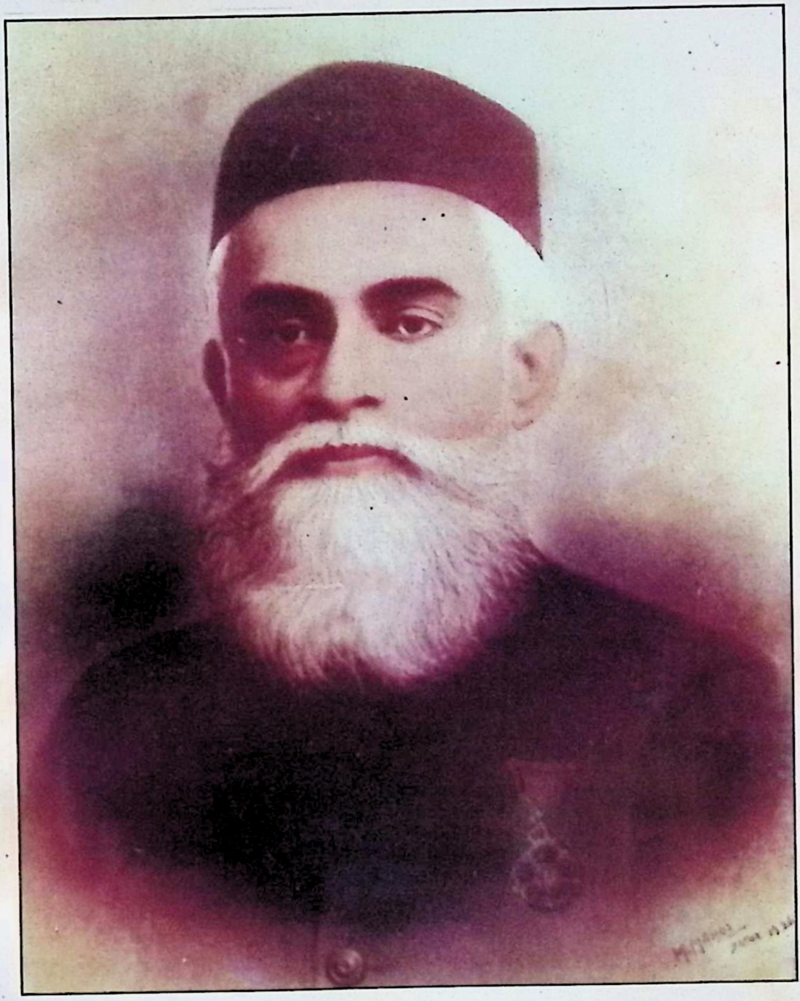
Khuda Bakhsh O. P. Library needs no introduction. It is an internationally known institution of national importance. Situated near the river Ganges in Patna the Capital City of Bihar, the Library was formally opened to the public in August, 1891 and was dedicated to the people of Bihar. It was inaugurated by the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Sir Charles Elliot. Apart from the matchless collection of books and manuscripts the library is justifiable proud of, the building of the Library itself is a fine specimen of Oriental architecture.

The founder of the Library Khan Bahadur Maulavi Khuda Bakhsh Khan, C.I.E., was a leading lawyer of Patna and had the rear distinction and honour of serving the Deccan High Court as its Chief Justice from 1895 to 1898 during the reign of Meer Mahboob Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam of the Hyderabad State. He was also a social reformer and a bibliophile.

He had inherited passion for books from his illustrious father Maulavi Mohammad Bakhsh Khan, who had collected a good number of manuscripts and rare books. He, at his death bed, left a will for his son Khuda Bakhsh to preserve his collection of books and manuscripts with utmost care and proper attention. The faithful and obedient son not only fulfilled the will in letter and spirit, but also kept on making useful additions to the collection. Through his extreme love for books, the collection soon became a centre of attraction of Islamic and oriental learning. Some of the manuscripts are very rare and richly decorated and no other copy of any one of them is to be found in any of the libraries of the world. In the words of V. C. Scott O'Connor, "there is nothing in the world to surpass the exquisite calligraphy, the enamelled gold, the priceless miniature, the colours of lapis lazuli and vermilion, of indigo and scarlet, green, purple, cinnabar and saffron, of some of these illustrating pages." The collection continue to grow rapidly even after the passing away of Khan Bahadur Maulavi Khan Saheb. At present it consists of more than 21,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hindi and Sanskrit languages and about two lakh twenty five thousand printed books in almost all the major oriental and occidental languages. In this way the seed which was sown by Mohammad Bakhsh and which was nourished so carefully by his son Khuda Bakhsh has taken the shape of a big shady tree. Famous British scholar and litterateur R. B. Sheridon has very rightly said that "a circulating library in a town is like a growing tree which blossoms throughout the year." Khuda Bakhsh Library is also serving as an ever-growing tree providing soothing shelter and spreading odour and fragrance of knowledge over the whole academic world.

The Library from its very inception, has been drawing attention of people from all walks of life towards its collections and have inspired scholars and poets to pen down their impressions about it and the multilateral personality of its founder. These writings and encomia are lying scattered in different journals and books. In view of their value and significance, the library has decided to compile and publish them in book form for the benefit of readers. Hence this volume. The first volume comprising Urdu, Persian and Arabic writings has already been published and the third volume which is proposed to include Hindi writings will follow soon.

Dr. Mohd. Ziauddin Ansari
Director



Khuda Bakhsh
(1842 d 1908)
founder of the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna

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The Islamic Libraries

— *By Khuda Bakhsh*

The existence of libraries implies a considerable written literature, and a considerable civilization; the excavations in Babylonia and Assyria have revealed the fact to the world that the taste for collecting books is no modern phenomenon. Passing from the twilight to the full daylight of history, we find among the Romans a decided taste for collecting books, not merely for private use, but also for the Public benefit. Not to speak of Ulpius Trajanus, that founder of the most famous of the Imperial libraries, there were other emperors who followed in his wake. It is said that in the fourth century there were twenty-eight public libraries in Rome only. Nor were libraries confined to the Imperial city merely.

The fall of the Western Empire was indeed a signal for the decay of letters. The barbarians streamed over the frontiers and established themselves on the ruins of the Roman Empire. In the stormy times that followed, the literary traditions of the Romans, if not forgotten entirely, served as an incentive or stimulus but to a few.

For many centuries Europe surrendered its claims of being an encourager and supporter of letters to a nation which had come into being, so to speak, at the sound of the voice of the Prophet of Arabia. After breaking the barriers of the Roman Empire and subverting the Sassanide dynasty, the Muslims turned their attention to the cultivation of learning. During the period of the Middle Ages these very inhabitants of the desert showed themselves the leaders and pioneers of civilization. Before I pass on to the proper subject, it will not be deemed out of place, I hope, if I give a brief history of the progress of learning among the Muslims.

It is a remarkable fact that the Arabs were not wholly without a taste of learning, even in the period known as 'the time of Ignorance.' The history of the Fair of Okaz is an eloquent commentary on this fact. It was a battle-field of the ambitious writers. It was here that the aspirants to fame received their laurel. Nor was the competition confined to merely literary productions. Here it was that persons skilled in any art or science, if I may use the word, showed their talent, and received the hall-mark of popular approbation.

Though Schultens held extravagant opinions on the antiquity of Arabic literature, still it is now fully established that 'the oldest' monuments of Arabic literature which we still possess were composed within the century which preceded the birth of Muhammad. They consist in short pieces of verse uttered on the spur of the moment, narration of combats between hostile tribes, passages in rhythmical prose, and *Qasidas* or elegies.[1] But it is to be noted that, though the Arabs composed poems, wrote *Qasidas*, and treasured in their memory the genealogical tables of different tribes, still, writing was of comparatively late introduction. It came into existence only a very short time before the birth of Islam.[2]

The result of the introduction of writing was far-reaching. It opened the way for the security and permanence of the intellectual work which had been done before the dawn of Islam, and, indeed, was a prelude to further intellectual progress. The history of the *Mu'allaqat* unmistakably points to the fact that the Arabs had fully realised the necessity of putting their literature into writing. The next step towards the perfection of Arabic Language was taken when, at the instance of the Khalif 'Ali, *Aswad-ad-Duali* drew up the rules for reading and speaking the language correctly. This, indeed, laid the foundation of the Arabic grammar.[3]

Till the death of the Prophet the literary activity of the Muslims was scant and limited, but coming in contact with the splendour of the Persian and the Byzantine Courts, they soon learned the manifold advantages of civilization. The Persians, who had attained a high civilization under their Sassanide rulers, were the real teachers of the Muslims. As early as the time of the Prophet their influence began to be felt. It was the Persian strategy which won the day in the 'Battle of the Ditch'. Next to the Persians were the Syrian doctors, who opened the eyes of the Arabs to the science and philosophy of the Greeks.

From the Persians the Arabs learned music, architecture, sculpture, politics, philosophy, wine and fine apparel. The great masters in Islam, if you trace them back to their cradle, observes a great writer, are natives of Bukhara and Khurasan and Bactria, and from the old native schools of Basrah and Nishapur, and Samarqand and Harat; some of Turkish, but mainly of Persian origin. The great impulse from the Greek schools came largely through the Christian heretics of Nisibis and Edessa. That these statements are not too strong is plain from the fact that most of the great writers were freedmen, as well as from such confessions as that wrung from the Caliph 'Abd ul-Malik. 'Alas! freedmen are masters of the free Arabs.'[4]

Having once started a literary career, the Muslims made progress, not by step; but by strides. The Khalifs and the nobles invariably led the van of culture. There was none of that sectarian bigotry or uncompromising orthodoxy which treats with supreme contempt and intolerance the thoughts, philosophy and literature of other nations. Having learnt from the conquered nations they in turn became masters themselves. The first academy of science in the Middle Ages was that of the Saracens at Toledo in Spain.[5] The free university of Cairo, the House of Wisdom, in the eleventh century anticipated Bacon's ideal with a fact. The 'Brothers of Purity' established the most remarkable institution for the civilization of science previous to modern times.[6] Hammer-purgstall enumerates 5,218 writers down to the eleventh century before Western Europe had done anything approximately equivalent to their work.

The most durable monument of the Catholic sympathy of the Muslims is found in the *A'in-i-Akbari* or Institutes of Akbar, and the *Dabistan*, written half a century later by Mohsin Fani.[7] The immortal work of Mohsin stands under the maxims, 'the leaves of God's books are the religious persuasion', and 'the time of a prophet is a universal time, and hath neither before nor after, as the Lord hath neither morn nor eve.' I have not been indulging in an unnecessary digression. To pass on to our subject. I have already noticed the fact that till the death of the Prophet the Arabs had a very limited literature. With the Conquest, however, they entered on a new stage. Still, the intellectual activity did not reach its height till the ascendancy of the House of 'Abbas. Not until then do we see the Muslim countries boundless in their splendour, and infinite in their resources. I shall be brief in what I have to say concerning the intellectual activity of the Muslims under the Omayyads. Professor Shibli has expressed his dissent from the opinion of *Ibn Khaldun* in regard to the intellectual performances of Khalid Ibn Yazid. *Ibn Khaldun* has summarily dismissed the traditions concerning the literary work of Khalid, but the Professor has conclusively proved that it is an error of *Ibn Khaldun.* He quotes in support of his view the encyclopaedic *Ibn Nadim,* who says that Khalid was passionately fond of alchemy. It was by the order of the latter that translations were made of Greek and Coptic books on the subject. Khalid, besides, was a distinguished author, and some of his works were extant down to the time of *Ibn Nadim.*[8]

After Khalid the progress of learning went on slowly but steadily till the time Mansur, when the horizon of Muslim learning was greatly extended. Mansur turned his attention to the translation of Persian and Greek books. The Patronage of the Khalif bore fruit a hundredfold, and the taste for books spread throughout the Muslim society. Such a large collection of books was made, that Harun ar-Rashid had to establish the famous *Bayt al-Hikmat.*

It is the conjecture of Professor Shibli that the first Muslim who collected books was Khalid Ibn Yazid. Any further investigation here on the subject would indeed be barren and unprofitable. I shall traverse merely the solid ground of history, and leave to others to settle controversial points. The above-mentioned *Bayt al-Hikmat* served a twofold purpose: a part of it was meant for storing books, and the other for carrying on the translation work. Henceforward, foreign learning streamed, in Muslim countries, in full tide. The *Bayt al-Hikmat* possessed books in many languages : Persian, Greek, Coptic, and Chaldean. Yahya Ibn Khalid, the Bermecide, was the head and front of the movement. He sent for *Pandits* from India, and it was through these *Pandits* of India that the hitherto concealed treasures of the Hindus became accessible to the Muslims. To Persian works special attention was paid, as the Bermecides were of Persian extraction.

The mantle of Harun fell on his son, and Mamun, following the example of his father, made large additions to the libraries, and carried on the translation work on a far greater scale. Tradition has it that he expended 300,000 *Dianars* in translating works of the Greeks.[9]

So powerful was the Persian influence on Mamun that in the beginning of his caliphate, while he was residing at Merv, he accepted Ardeshir as his model. Thus it was that the Persian literature received deep attention during the reigns of Harun and Mamun. Mamun did his utmost to enrich his library with the relics of pre-Islamite Arabia. Not to speak of the *Qasidas* and poems of the early Arabs, he eagerly sought after the letters, documents, and treatises of that age. Among other curiosities his library was the proud possessor of an autograph of 'Abdu'l Muttalib. We can form some idea of the immensity of the library by the fact that though Baghdad was ever and anon the theatre of the most desolating scenes, yet many books which belonged to his library came right down to the seventh century of the *Hijrah*.

It was the good fortune of Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah to see many of these books.[10] The natural consequence of the passion for collecting books was a demand for copyists and bookbinders. Ibn 'Ali Harish, the famous bookbinder, was in the service of the Khalif Mamun. Of the copyists whose names history has thought worthy of preservation I shall mention Ibn al-Bawwab, Ibn Muqla, the vazir of Maqtadir Bi'llah, Ya'qut Musta'simi, and Mir 'Ali.

Since the art of painting has been proscribed by the Muslim religion, it was in the art of penmanship that the followers of the Prophet sought distinction. Even the Khalifs and governors prided themselves on writing a good hand. The Khalif 'Uthman made four copies of the Qur'an with his own hand and sent them to the most important centres of the caliphate. The terrible Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf followed in the wake of 'Uthman, and presented the copies of the Quran which he had made to the chief cities of the Muslim Empire.

Sultan Ibrahim, the son of Muhmud, the Ghaznevide, wrote a splendid hand. Every year he made a copy of the Qur'an and sent it to Mecca. *Ibn Khaldun* says that the African Sultan Abu'l Hasan sent to Mecca a copy of the Qur'an which he had made himself, and which he had most beautifully illuminated. The same prince made a second copy, which he sent to Medina, and was intending to make a third copy for Jerusalam, but he died before its execution.

After Mamun love for books made its way throughout Baghdad. The nobles as well as the savants spared neither pain nor money in collecting books. Fath bin Khaqan, the vazir of Mutawakkil Bi'llah, established a magnificent library, and the Vazir of Wathiq Bi'llah, was in the habit of spending 10,000 rupees every month on the translation and copying of books. The library of al-Waqidi (ninth century) required 120 camels, with 600 chests, to carry it from Baghdad to beyond the Tigris.[11] The taste for books went on increasing so much that, in the fourth century of the Hijrah, the Muslim Empire was studded with libraries.

Flying before the Abbaside advance, the last scion of the house of Umayyah sought safety in the distant land of Spain. He was received with open arms, and before long succeeded in establishing the Caliphate of Cordova, which rivalled, if it did not outshine, the intellectual glories of Cairo and Baghdad. In Spain, more than elsewhere, the Muslim genius received its full development and attained its full stature. Muslim Spain stands out in the history of the Middle Ages in unfading splendour. To it Europe owes perhaps the largest debt, for it was Spain which handed the lamp of learning to the Aryans of the West when they were able to receive it.

From the very commencement of the Muslim domination in the Iberian Peninsula literature, history and poetry flourished, but it was Sultan al-Hakam the second, surnamed Al-Mustansir Bi'llah (the Sultan of Cordova from A.H. 350 to 366), who caused philosophical works to be brought from the East and translated for the benefit of the public.[12] With the accession of Hakam to the throne of Cordova a new impulse was given to the literary activity of the Muslims. Messengers were sent to all parts of the East to Procure books, and literary men were invited and liberally paid.

History records that when Abu'l Faraj Is'fahani had finished his well-known work *Kitab al-Aghani,* Hakam sent a special messenger to him to obtain a copy of the book before it could be obtained elsewhere. The historian *Ibn Khaldun* asserts that the catalogue of the poetical works alone ran up to 880 pages.

The most famous copyists and binders of the age were in the service of Hakam, and every trouble was taken to make his collection the most unique and perfect of its time.

Though historians are at variance as to the exact number of books which the library of Hakam contained, still they are all agreed that it was a most stupendous collection. Curiously enough most of the books were annotated and commented upon by Hakam, a standing witness to his deligence and perseverance. But the fate which overtook this library was quite typical of the fate which befell others.

Al-Hakam was succeeded by his son Hisham al-Mu'ayyad Bi'llah, who was of a very tender age. Under the regency of Mansur bin Abi 'Ammar the liberal policy of

Hakam was abandoned and that of oppression and repression adopted. Books treating either of natural philosophy, astronomy, or 'the doctrine of the ancients' were given away or destroyed, and only those were suffered to remain which treated of rhetoric, grammar, poetry, history, law, and tradition. The tide set strong towards orthodoxy, and the reaction against the policy of Hakam continued unchanged until the final overthrow of the Bani Umayyah.

At the beginning of the fifth century after the Hijrah adventurers arose in various parts of the kingdom and divided among themselves the inheritance of the Spanish Khalif. Every now and then masters were changed and fire and sword worked havoc without end. In one of these civil wars books suffered most. They were either destroyed or sold at low prices. Most of the literary treasures which the royal library contained were scattered through this country (Spain), says the historian Sa'id, some were taken to Seville, some to Granada, some to Almeira and other principal cities. I myself met with many in this city (Toledo) that were saved from the general ruin, and in the number there were a few which escaped the search and destruction made in the days of Mansur. Some of them were of such a character that they would certainly have brought punishment upon any person found to possess them.[13] Such was the ultimate fate of this splendid library! So universal was the passion for learning in Spain, in the heyday of Muslim power, that the number of libraries open to the public in different parts of Spain amounted to seventy.

In spite of the misfortunes which, time after time, cast a crimson shadow on Spain during Muslim rule, and in spite of the out-break of Christian fanaticism which marked the final expulsion of the Moors from the peninsula, Spain today possesses an excellent collection of oriental manuscripts. In this place I can hardly refrain from quoting an incident which the historian al-Maqqari relates concerning al-Hadhrami.

> "I resided once in Cordova for some time, when I used to attend the book-market every day, in hopes of meeting with a certain work which I was very anxious to procure. This I had done for a considerable time, when, on a certain day, I happened to find the object of my search, a beautiful copy, elegantly written and illustrated with a very fine commentary.
>
> I immediately bid for it, and went on increasing my bidding, but, to my great disappointment, I was always outbid by the crier, although the price was far superior to the value of the book. Surprised at this, I went to the crier, and asked him to show me the individual who had thus outbid me for the book to a sum far beyond its real value, when he pointed out to me a man of high rank, to whom, on approaching, I said, 'May God exalt his worship the doctor. If thou art desirous of this book I will relinquish it, for through our mutual biddings its price has risen far above its real value'. He replied, 'I am no doctor, neither do I know what the contents of the books are, but I am anxious to complete a library which I am forming, and which will give me repute among the chiefs of the city; and, as there happens to be still a vacant place capable of holding this book, I thought I might as well bid for it."

According to *Ibn Khaldun* the Sultan of Morocco, Abu Yusuf, having concluded peace with Don Sancho, demanded back the beautiful books which fell into his hands during his campaigns in Muslim countries. The Spanish prince complied with his request, and sent to him a large number of books, which the Sultan deposited in the college which he had built at

Fez. The books, thus, were placed at the disposal of the literary men who might require their use.

To turn to the other parts of the Muslim dominion. When the Abbasside Caliphate fell on evil times, the governors of the provinces cut themselves adrift from the central authority and, renouncing the shadowy allegiance of the Caliph, established their own dynasties; for instance, we find the Samanides ruling in Bukhara; Hamadanites planting their standard in Syria; *Buyides* governing Shiraz, and the Fatemides setting themselves up as the rightful sovereigns of Egypt. But though new dynasties arose and the Caliphate of Baghdad sank into entire political impotence, still there was one thing common between all these founders of dynasties and wearers of the crown; it was the desire for advancing learning and encouraging the progress of letters.

In Bukhara Nuh Ibn Mansur, the Sultan of Bukhara, founded a remarkable library. Here is the account of it given by Avicenna: "Having requested and obtained permission from Nuh Ibn Mansur to visit the library, I went there and found a great number of rooms filled with books packed up in trunks. One room contained philological and poetical works; another jurisprudence, and so on, the books on each particular science being kept in a room by themselves. I then read the catalogue on the ancient authors and found therein all I required. I saw many books, the very titles of which were unknown to most persons, and others which I never met with before nor since."[14] It was this Nuh Ibn Mansur who offered the premiership to Sahib Ibn 'Abbad, but the latter declined it, and one of the reasons assigned was that it would require 400 camels to transport his book only.[15]

Though the account is meagre and imperfect, yet it is related by Bashari that 'Add ud-Dowlah was the founder of a most magnificent library in Shiraz. The building which contained the library was a part of the palace and, on the authority of Bashari, was without a rival in the Muslim Empire. Unfortunately no account of this collection is given by any writer, and Bashari himself incidentally mentions the fact while describing the palace of 'Add du-Dowlah.

Saif ud-Dowlah, again, united in himself the warrior and man of letters. Imam Tha'labi asserts that, with the exception of the Abbassides, no Muslim Court was ever filled with so many learned men as that of Saif ud-Dowlah. Al-Farabi was indeed a stipendiary of his court.[16] It is said that Abu'l Faraj was fifty years in completing the *Kitab au-Aghani*, and that he took it to Saif ud-Dowlah Ibn Hamadani, who remunerated him with a thousand pieces of gold, regretting his inability to offer a more adequate recompense.[17]

The following is the account given by Ibn Nadim of another famous collector of books. It well deserves attention:

> "Muhammad Ibn Ishaq says, "There was a man in the city of Al-Haditha whose name was Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan, but who was generally known by the surname of Ibn Abi Ba'rah. He was a book collector and possessed a library, the like of which I never saw for its extent. In the division of Arabic books were treatises on grammar, philology and literature, with some old books besides. I met this man a number of times, and he at length became intimate with me, though he was in general very reserved, and apprehensive that the Hamadan family (the sovereigns of Aleppo) might seize on what he had. He then pulled out a large trunk containing about three hundred pounds weight of parchments folded double, and of Egyptian card paper (Qirtas), Chinese

> paper (Waraq Sin) and paper of Tehama and paper of Khorasan. These contained passages of pure Arabic learned from the Arabs of the desert, a few of their Qasidas, and some notes on grammar... Among them I saw written: Quran in the handwriting of Khalid Ibn Abi'l Hayyaj, one of 'Ali's partisans; then followed these words: This volume came into possession of Abu 'Abda'llah Ibn Hani. Among these papers I remarked some in the handwriting of the Imamś al-Hasan and al-Hussain; others contained protections and charters (*'Uhud*) in the handwriting of the Khalif 'Ali. Among the autographs of the grammarians and philologers were those of Ibn al-A'la, ash-Shaibani, Asma'i, Ibn al-'Arabi, Sibawaih, al-Farra and al-Kisa'i. Among those of traditionists were some by Ibn 'Uyaina, Sufiyan ath-Thauri, al-Auza'i, & c. And I discovered also in these papers a proof that grammar was invented by Abu'l Aswad; it was a document in four sheets on Chinese paper, I believe, and bearing this title: 'Discourse on the governing and the governed parts of speech, by Abu'l Aswad, in the handwriting of Yahya Ibn Yamur, one of Abu'l Aswad's disciples. When the owner of these papers died the trunk and its contents disappeared and we never heard more of it."

The great traveller and geographer Yaqut found at Merv no less than twelve libraries. During his three years residence in that city he gathered the greater part of the material for his geographical dictionary. In the loan of books much consideration was shown to him, and Yaqut kept with him 200 volumes at a time.[18]

I have already spoken of the library of al-Hakam of Spain. If there was any other library which could compare with it in vastness and splendor, it was the royal library of the

Fatemides of Cairo. This was a stupendous collection indeed. The historians disagree as to the exact number of books which this library possessed, but the lowest calculation is that it contained 100,000 volumes. It counted among its curiosities two globes: one was of considerable antiquity and the other was the very globe which was made for Add-ul-Dowlah by Abu'l Hassan Sufi.

Moreover, in A.H.395, the Caliph al-Hakam laid the foundation of *Dar al-'Ilm,* or House of Science, called also the *Dar al-Hikmah,* or House of Philosophy. Maqrizi, in his *Khitat*, gives the following account of this establishment:

> "The public of all classes were admitted and had permission to read or copy, as they pleased, the works which the Caliph had sent to it from his own libraries."

The quantity of books which it contained was immense, and consisted of treatises on all the sciences and on the general literature; among these volumes were some written by the most celebrated penmen... In the year 403 al-Hakam sent for a number of mathematicians, logicians, jurisconsults, and physicians, employed in the *Dar al-'Ilm;* each class was introduced separated and discussed questions in his pressence; afterwards he clothed them in robes of honour and made them rich presents. The establishment possessed an annual revenue of 2,570 *Dinars* for its support.

In the storms of the fifth century of the Hijrah the larger portion of the intellectual treasures went to wreck and ruin. We learn with surprise and regret that to Abu'l Faraj Maghribi were given away twenty-five camels' load of books in discharge of a debt owing to him and his adherents. But this

Vazir was not destined to enjoy this rich booty for long. He himself was doomed to see evil days; his house was pillaged and sacked, and the books in consequence shared the common destruction.

Despite the misfortunes which repeatedly spread anarchy and disorder in Cairo, a large number of books existed in Cairo even down to the time of Saladin. It is indeed to the everlasting discredit of the son of Ayyub that he did not show that respect and passion for books which characterised some of the Muslim rulers and conquerors. Saladin caused the treasures which were found in the palace to be put up to auction. The Qadi al-Fadil purchased a considerable number of books, and thus laid the foundation of his own private collection. One sale could not exhaust the immense collection. In 572 A.H. a fresh sale was ordered of the library which formed a part of the palace of the Fatemide Caliphs. 'Imada'ddin Isfahani who was present at this sale, has left us a picturesque account of it. He picked out for himself 200 volumes, but Saladin would not let him pay for them, but made him a present of them. The shrewd 'Imada'ddin adds that soon after this Saladin showed another act of kindness to him. 'Imada'ddin, having gone to Saladin, saw a number of books lying before him. He was invited to look at them, and on being told that some of them were works for which he was searching, he replied that all the books which lay before him were equally useful to him. The Sultan, therefore, presented them all to him. The books could not have fallen to better hands than 'Imad or Qadi al-Fadil's. In fact Qadi al-Fadil placed a part of his books in the library of the college which he founded at Cairo.

The *Mamluks* of Egypt adhered faithfully to the literary traditions of their predecessors, and the passion for collecting books went on unabated as before. According to the historian

Badra'addin Aintabi, the Qadi al-Qudat 'Ala'a'ddin 'Ali Ibn Mahmud, surnamed Ibn Moghuli, who died in the year 628 of the Hijrah, bequeathed a part of his collection to the library of the college founded in Cairo by Malik Ashaf-Borshbai. We learn from Maqrizi, 'Abul Mahasin, and Nuwairi that, among other valuable things which were discovered at the residence of Amin ad-Dowlah Abu'ldjin surnamed Samiri, there were precious books to the extent of 100,000 volumes: some of them works of the most celebrated copyists. The Imam Nura'ddin 'Ali Ibn Jabir, who died in Cairo in the 725 of the Hijrah, left a collection of 6,000 volumes.

It is not unreasonable to believe that a number of books which originally belonged to the Fatemids found their way into Syria. Possibly these passed into the hands of the family of 'Ammar of Tripoli. The Arab historians relate that when Tripoli, A.H.503, fell into the hands of the Crusaders, they burnt books which they found there. Malik Nasir Yusuf, a descendant of Saladin and soveriegn of Damascus, having built a college which he called *Nasiriyah,* furnished it with a library which boasted of extremely rare books. According to Nuwairi, among the presents which Malik Nasir Yusuf sent to the Caliph of Baghdad, in the year 648 of the Hijrah, there were 300 volumes written by celebrated copyists. It is said that there was also a Qur'an written by Ibn Hazin. According to Ibn Khaldun the Vazir Abu'l Hasan 'Ali Bin Yusuf Qifti, generally known under the name of Qadi Akram, was intensely fond of books. On his death-bed he bequeathed his books to Malik Nasir Salahuddin Yusuf. This collection was highly thought of by the contemporaries.

The historian Ahmad 'Asqalani, speaking of the famous grammarian Muhammad Firúzabadi, author of the *Qamus,* expresses himself thus: "He never travelled without carrying with him several loads of books." It is singular, indeed, that Africa was not behind hand in libraries, both private and public. One is disposed to believe that, like Syria, Africa also received its share from the collection of the Fatemides of Cairo. But our information on this point is extremely meagre and deficient. A historian of the town of Qairawan informs us that a Qadi of this place, called Abu'l Fadl Ahmad, had made a collection of books which, on his death, was sold for the handsome sum of one thousand pieces of gold.

When the Franks took possession of Sebta (Ceuta) in the year 817 of the Hijrah they carried away everything which they found there, even the scientific books, which were in great number. It is a matter of profound regret that the Muslim historians have not left us a connected and consecutive account of the libraries which were established, step by step, throughout the length and breadth of the Muslim dominion. We have thus to fall back upon stray and desultory scraps of information, and our regret is all the greater when we take into account the fact that even the very names of many libraries, which must have rivetted the attention and extorted the admiration of the scholars of the age, have fallen into hopeless oblivion. Nor is there any possible chance of reclaiming them from this obscurity. The political changes, the desolating civil wars, the triumph of orthodoxy: all indeed conspired together to throw back the hour-hand of progress, and to hurl down for evermore the goddess of 'Pacific Culture', which had so long reigned supreme in Muslim hearts.

But it is not idle to believe that we would have had many more remnants of these splendid libraries than we now actually possess, had not the black storm-clouds of the Mughal hordes swooped down upon fairest provinces of the Muslim Empire and relegated the rich treasures of its civilisation to an everlasting oblivion.

History has a thrilling and pathetic tale to tell of the ravages of the Mughals. On the taking of Bukhara and Samarqand the spirit of vandalism which they displayed was quite worthy of the barbarians that they were. In 671 A.H., when the town of Bukhara was destroyed by the order of Abaqa Khan, the son of Halaku, the college of Masoud Bey, which was the most brilliant and flourishing of its age, was recklessly and heartlessly burnt. On this occasion a large number of books were devoured by the flames.

Again, when the town of Hamah was taken by Halaku, the books of the palace library were sold at shamelessly low prices. Ibn Batutah says: a line of witnesses proved that in the Tartar wars in ‘Iraq 24,000 literary men perished and only two escaped.[19]

Before concluding this paper I shall briefly refer to the conditions of learning in India. True it is, indeed, that the Mughal never rose to the same eminence in culture as the Muslims of Baghdad or Cairo or Cordova; nevertheless, they held themselves up, after their iconoclastic work was done, as the patron of letters. The descendants of Chengiz Khan and the sons and grandsons of Tamerlane embraced Islam and encouraged learning. It was under them that Nasiru’ddin Tusi, Qutbu’ddin Shirazi, Sa‘du’ddin Taftazani and others flourished. The Mughal dynasty in India, likewise, extended protection to arts and sciences, and took deep interest in the progress of culture. The Emperor Shah Jahan was indeed a well-read man and extremely fond of books. The ‘Adil Shahi and Qutub Shahi kings of the Deccan also followed the example of the Mughal princes as far as the encouragement of learning was concerned. In India there existed several well-known libraries, but no traces of these libraries were found after the Mutiny. In those times, of which history has a doleful tale to tell, these libraries were either destroyed or books were taken out of the country. The few that remained in the country were sold at miserably low prices owing to poverty no less than want of education. Thus, today in India, as far as I am aware, there is no library of Oriental books which can stand in comparison with the libraries either at Medina or Cairo or Constantinpole.

I hope I shall not be deemed guilty of want of modesty if I describe the library which I have given to the city of Patna. It is not vanity but the desire of bringing it to the notice of the Orientalists in Europe, that impels me to mention it in this paper. Though the library is now under the control of the Government of India, and though every possible precaution which wisdom or foresight can dictate is taken to assure its safety and permanence, still the library is incomplete without a printing press. Let us hope that ere long we shall possess a press to multiply the copies of valuable works and so bring them within the reach of the reading public.

The idea of founding a public library long floated before the vision of my father. The greater portion of his income he spent in the collection of manuscripts, which numbered 1,400 at the time of his death in July 1876.

On his death-bed he entrusted these manuscripts to me, and asked me to convert his library into a public library for the use of the community, whenever I should find myself in a position to do so. I inherited to the fullest extent my father's passion for collecting books, and since his death I have been making large additions to it. In 1891 the library was opened to the public. It then contained nearly 4,000 manuscripts. The number of manuscripts now is over 5,000.[20] The collection of English books, though not very large, is indeed respectable.

including nearly all the most important literary and scientific works.

The library, further, possesses select manuscripts which formerly belonged to great orientalists like De Sacy, Sir Gore Ousely and Mr.Blockmann of the Calcutta Madrasah, and many indeed with notes in the handwriting of these men.

I have spoken above of the destruction to which libraries in Muslim countries were constantly liable during the periods of political excitement. In addition to the oft-recurring internal dissensions, the ravages of the Mughals and the fanaticism of the Christians obliterated countless books.

Owing to these misfortunes productions of Muhammadan writers from the second to the seventh century of the Hijrah have become exceedingly rare. The Muhammadan books now extant are chiefly the writings of the authors who flourished from the middle of the seventh to the end of the eleventh century of the Hijrah. I have succeeded in securing some manuscripts of earlier dates which treat of astronomy, surgery, medicine, metaphysics, and mixed mathematics. Many of the manuscripts are written by the most famous scribes, and are most exquisitely done. In the first volume of the catalogue which I have published I have dealt at length with these manuscripts. If time and health permit me I shall soon bring out the second volume of the catalogue of the library. I shall mention but a few here as I have a limited space at my disposal.

The work of Zahravi on surgery is a manuscript which requires particular attention. This copy bears 584 A.H. as the date of execution. In this manuscript the pictures of the surgical instruments are carefully drawn and the marvelous similarity which some of the instruments bear to those which are supposed to be of modern invention tempts us to believe that the Muslims of Spain were not entirely unfamiliar with them.

There is another old manuscript which it may be worth our while to mention here. It is the work of Dioscorides on medicinal plants, and which was translated by the Arabs during the Caliphate of Harun ar-Rashid. This manuscript is of great historic interest. It is the very manuscript which was once deposited in the charitable dispensary established by Jalaluddin Shirwan Shah in Shiraz, some six hundred years ago. The Muslims made this book the basis of their future inquiries on medicinal plants, and the library possesses the most important and authoritative works written by the Muslims on the subject. Further, this library possesses a very old manuscript of the treatises of Thabit Ibn Qurra, and some of the writings of Nasiruddin Farabi and Abu Raihan Bairuni.

I am told by a well-known orientalist of England that our copy of Nahhas's Commentary of the Mu'allaqat is far superior to any that exists in the libraries of Europe.

There are, moreover, manuscripts which used to belong to the Emperors of Delhi: for instance, the poetical work of Mirza Kamran, brother of Humayun, written by Muhammad Ishaq Shihabi, was with the Emperors of Delhi from Akbar to Muhammad Shah. The manuscript bears the signatures of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

There are other books too, bearing the signatures of Shah Jahan 'Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Kings of the 'Adil Shahi and some of the members of the Qutub Shahi family which are in the library.

Jahangir, in his autobiography, makes mention of a copy of the *Zu'aikha,* which, from the description given by him, I consider to be identical with the one in the library. This book, according to the estimate of Jahangir, was valued at 20,000 rupees.

Of poetical works the library possesses over four hundred manuscripts; some of them are sumptuously illuminated and magnificently bound in the Oriental style.

The Muhammad works on religion, viz., the *Hadith* (tradition), the *Fiqh* (law), the *Usul* (Jurisprudence), *Tafsir* (commentary on the Quran), are many in number, bearing the signatures of the best authors, such as Sabki, Dhahabi, Ibn Hajar, and others. The collection of historical works is worthy of notice : *History of India,* written by various Muslim writers, and also the biographies of the Emperors of the Mughal dynasty, constitute the most important portion of this collection.

These are rare books, and unless care is taken for their preservation they are likely to be all but extinct after the lapse of half a century. The library would indeed fulfil its mission if an arrangement is made to edit and publish them. I fondly hope that before long the Government of India will turn its serious attention towards the publication of the important literary and historical works which lie buried in the library. It will only be doing its duty in bringing within the reach of the public books which deserve attention of every person who is at all interested in the history of the Eastern nations.

The history of the literary activity of the Muslims reads like a beautiful romance when we look around and see the weltering chaos in which they are now engulfed.

Let us 'cleave to the sunnier side of doubt,' and let us cherish the hope that the dawn of broadening culture and soaring aspiration is not far distant, and that the Muslim community, having once awakened to the necessity of keeping themselves abreast of modern culture and civilization, will win laurels alike in the field, the forum and the closet.

References:

1. Ibn Khal., vol.1, Introd. xv and xvi.
2. Ibid., vol. II, p.284.
3. Ibid., vol. I, p.662.
4. Johnson, Oriental Religions, pp.679-80.
5. Hammer-Purgstall, Literaturgeschichte, vol. I, p. ixii.
6. See Johnson, p.672, note (2).
7. Ascribed to Mohsin-i-Fani; the real author is Maubid S/o Azar-i-Kaiwan (Ed.)
8. Kremer, Culturgeschichte des Orients, vol. II, p.450.
9. Price, Mohemedan Empire, vol. II, p.142.
10. Ibn Khal., vol. IV, p.158, note (1).
11. Purgstall, vol. I, introd., p. ixvi.
12. Al-Maqqari, appendix, vol. I, p. xiii.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibn Khal., vol. I, p.445 note (10).
15. Ibid., vol. I, p.215.
16. Ibid., vol. III, p.307.
17. Ibid., vol. II, p.250.
18. Von Kremer, Culturgeschichte des Orients, vol. II, pp.434-35.
19. Lee's Trans., p.89; Quatremire, Melanges d'histoire, pp.1-39; Prof. Shibli, Essays, pp.18-42.
20. This was the position in 1902. Today the figure has touched 14,000 (Ed.)

Courtesy: Khuda Bakhsh Library Journal No.6

Khuda Bakhsh : The Indian Bodley

— By Dr. Sachidananda Sinha

The Patna Oriental Public Library — popularly known, after its founder, as the Khuda Bakhsh Library — is one of the very finest collections of Islamic literature in the world. It is rich in rare, valuable, and beautifully-illuminated manuscripts in Arabic and Iranian languages, in various branches of literature, learning and knowledge, written by some of the most famous calligraphists in Muslim countries, including Hindustan. "It embalms, at their best, for those who care to know about them, the ideals of the old Muslim world", says Mr.V.C.Scott O'Connor, in his exceedingly well written work, called *An Eastern Library*, which highly interesting and excellent, little, book should be studied by those concerned with the subject. "In truth," he justly adds, "there is nothing in the world to surpass the exquisite calligraphy, the enamelled gold, the priceless miniatures, the colours of *lapis-lazuli* and vermilion, of indigo and scarlet, green, purple cinnabar and saffron, of these illuminated pages."

The nucleus of this truly magnificent collection was formed by the founder's father, Muhammad Bakhsh (1815-1876), who lived at Chapra, in North Bihar, in the first half of the nineteenth century, and who came of a family given to law and letters. He removed himself to practise at Patna in 1843, soon after the birth of his son, Khuda Bakhsh. It was he who formed the nucleus, which was later developed by Khuda Bakhsh into the great institution, containing the magnificent collection of manuscripts, which is the glory of the city of

Patna.

Khuda Bakhsh was born, at Chapra, in 1842. He was educated in Calcutta, and after passing through struggles and privations for years, ultimately became a lawyer, and settled down to practise at Patna, in 1868, at the age of twenty-six. He was a man of striking personality, and dignified appearance. Having achieved notable success in his profession, and served for many years as the Government Pleader — to which office he was appointed in recognition of his forensic ability — he went to Hyderabad (Deccan), in 1894, as the Chief Justice of the Nizam's High Court, where he served till 1898. Thereafter, on his return to Patna, he lived in retirement till his death, in 1908. For his useful public activities, he was awarded a Certificate of Honour at the Delhi Durbar of 1877, was elected the first Vice-Chairman of the Patna Municipality, and of the Patna District Board — on the introduction of the system of local self-government, by Lord Ripon, in 1883 — the Chairmanship being then reserved by law for the District Officer. In recognition of his later public activities, a Khan Bahadurship was conferred on him, in 1883; while a Companionship of the Order of the Indian Empire was bestowed on him, in 1903, in appreciation of his public spirit as the founder of the Oriental Library. He was also nominated a Fellow of the Calcutta University.

In 1908, upon the completion of his sixty-sixth birthday, he died at Patna; and was buried within the precincts of his world-famous Library. "There," wrote his scholarly son, Salah-ud-din, "amid all the associations which the Library enshrines, there under the shadow of that literary pantheon, in the exalted companionship of the great writers of Islam, he rests at the end of his life's voyage." I agree with the writer that there could be no more fitting, or a more worthy, restingplace for so great a bibliophile — the greatest that India had so far produced, and so devoted a lover of Muslim Literature and learning. From 1893, until he went to Hyderabad, in 1894, I was intimately associated with him in the work and administration of the Library, and after he had left Patna, I worked as the Honorary Secretary of the Institution, until his return from Hyderabad, in 1898, on his retirement from the Nizam's High Court. Of that sound scholar and devoted bibliophile, the founder of the greatest Library, in India, of Islamic learning, that splendid institution itself stands as a lasting monument; and Patna justly claims to be regarded as a place of pilgrimage for all interested in Islamic studies and scholarship.

II

Sir Jadunath Sarkar the famous historian of Muslim India, who knew Khuda Bakhsh personally — thus writes of him, his scholarship and public spirit : — "He was one of the greatest authorities on Islamic bibliography. An article from his pen on this subject appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* (in 1902). But it represents only a small part of his knowledge. I remember how one day he poured out of the copious store of his memory, a full list of Arabic biographers and critics, from the first century of the Hijera to the eighth, with running comments on the value of each. Most of their works he had himself collected. He also compiled a descriptive catalogue of many of his manuscripts, the *Mahbub-ul-albab*, written in Persian, and lithographed at Hyderabad in 1314 A.H. Next to the acquisition of a rare manuscript, what gave him most delights was to see anybody using his library in carrying on research." Sir Jadunath then describes the fine structure built by Khuda Bakhsh, in which he housed the splendid collection he had formed: — "Khuda Bakhsh had promised to his dying father to erect a house for the Library, but the way in which he carried out his promise must have delighted Muhammad Bakhsh's soul, in paradise. This middle-class lawyer spent Rs.80,000 on the Library building. It is a two-storied structure with a spacious hall, and two side rooms on the first floor, and a wide shady verandah going all around it. The two stair-cases, the west verandahs, and most of the lower rooms, are paved with marble or stone mosaics; in the other verandahs and rooms the floor is covered with encaustic tiles. The whole Library, with the building and grounds, was made over to the public by a trust-deed, on 29th October, 1891 — one of the conditions being that the manuscripts should not be removed from Patna. The donor in his unselfishness did not even give his own name to his gift, but called it the Oriental Public Library. The public, however, do no accept this self-effacement, and the Khuda Bakhsh Library is the only name by which it is known in India and Europe."

The building originally constructed, and opened in 1891, suffered seriously in the terrible cataclysm of 1934. It had to be pulled down, in part, and replaced by a separate, commodious, building especially adapted to the modern requirements of a Library of manuscripts. "But Khuda Bakhsh's devotion to the Library is not to be measured by the money he spent on it, practically all his earnings. His whole heart was set on it. The Library was the subject of his thoughts in waking and sleep alike. His very dreams centred round it. He was the Indian Bodley, and unborn generations of Indian scholars and readers will bless his memory and say that he was rightly named *Khuda Bakhsh*, 'the Gift of God'." Thus Sir Jadunath Sarkar concludes his appreciation of the greatest Indian bibliophile, an appreciation with which I wholly agree, and fully endorse.

III

To attempt to describe the riches of the Khuda Bakhsh Library, in a short compass, would be an impossible task, and he who would like to have some idea of them should not only see them casually, but scrutinize them for days, weeks and months. A short account of the collection was given by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his article, contributed to the *Modern Review*, for September, 1908 — from which I have quoted some passages above. Another such sketch was given by the founder's son — Salah-ud-din Khuda Bakhsh — in his essay headed, "My Father: His Life and Reminiscences," which was included in his book, called *Essays — Indian and Islamic*; while a longer record is to be found in Mr.V.C.Scott O'Connor's book, *An Eastern Library*. For the reader of this sketch of the life-work of Khuda Bakhsh, I cannot do better than quote a passage from his own article in the *Nineteenth Century*, on "Islamic Libraries." He wrote in the course of it:— "I hope I shall not be deemed guilty of want of modesty if I describe the Library which I have given to the city of Patna. It is not vanity, but the desire of bringing it to the notice of the orientalists in Europe, that impels me to mention it in this paper. The idea of founding a Library long floated before the vision of my father. The greater portion of his income he spent in the collection of manuscripts, which numbered 1,400 at the time of his death, in July 1876. On his death-bed he entrusted these manuscripts to me, and asked me to convert his Library for the use of the community, whenever I should find myself in a position to do so. I inherited, to the fullest extent, my father's passion for collecting books, and since his death I have been making large additions to it. In 1891, the Library was opened to the public. It then contained nearly 4,000 manuscripts. The number of manuscripts now is over 5,000. The Library, further, possesses select manuscripts which formerly belonged to great orientalists, like De Sacy, Sir Gore Ouseley, and Mr.Blochmann, of the Calcutta Madrasah, and many, indeed, are the notes in the handwriting of those men." To complete this brief reference to the contents of the Library, I may quote a few lines from his son's article on Khuda Bakhsh, mentioned above, which will convey to the reader an idea of the characteristics of that greatest book-collector and book-fancier. Thus wrote Salah-ud-din:— "I may here mention that my father had a peculiar weakness for fine binding. He insisted on his books being excellently bound, and the Library can boast of rare specimens not only of oriental but also of European binding. It were idle to try to convey in a few pages any adequate idea of the imperishable treasures which the Library possesses, and I shall not embark upon a task which I consider so hopelessly impossible," I agree. But those desirous of having an idea of some of the gems in the Library should consult the sources of information mentioned by me above, and also the great catalogue of the collection, to which some reference is made in the next section.

The Oriental Public Library was opened to the public — as stated above — in 1891, by Sir Charles Elliott, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Lord Curzon's attention to the Library was drawn by Dr.(afterwards, Sir) Denison Ross, of the Calcutta Madrasah, and also by Sir Charles Lyall — both eminent scholars of Muslim literature. But for their efforts, that valuable store-house of Islamic learning would have remained unnoticed by, and unknown to, Lord Curzon. Both of them being scholars of Islamic literature were irresistibly drawn to the Library. It was they who aroused the interest of Lord Curzon in that great institution, with the result that that accomplished scholar and keen antiquarian, visited the Library in 1903. The sanction for the construction of a commodious reading-hall, and the preparation of the descriptive catalogue, under the supervision of Dr. Denison Ross, were the direct outcome of Lord Curzon's visit. During the decades that have followed since, the catalogue of the contents of the Library had been compiled by scholars, in numerous volumes, and printed by Government, and it was justly regarded by experts as a monumental reference work on the subjects it dealt with. I quote below Lord Curzon's remarks made by him in the visitor's book of the institution, in 1903, which are worthy of attention even now: — "While at Patna, I inspected with great pleasure the Library which the liberality of Khuda Bakhsh has presented to the public, and I was shown many of the rare and valuable treasures which it contains. I discussed with the generous donor the means by which the collection may be preserved from risk of fire, or any other danger, and by which its advantages may be made even more accessible than they now are to the reader and student. I hope that steps may be taken in both of these 'directions'. The Library had been long since a Government-aided institution, and is well maintained by a handsome grant made to it by the Provincial Government of Behar.

IV

Such was Khuda Bakhsh — a truly great man, of whom not only Behar, but India may well be proud. "My father always deplored and deprecated the tendency of his countrymen to invent a pedigree, or claim fanciful descent. He regarded such a tendency as the surest sign of national decadence and demoralisation, and the last refuge of the unworthy and the incompetent" — so wrote Salahuddin of his father. And those, who (like myself) had the privilege of knowing him intimately, will readily endorse that verdict of his son. Though a great scholar, there was no taint of that snobbery about him which one finds, in this country, associated with some who have pretensions to learning and scholarship. He lived the simplest life, and though he earned much as an advocate, he spent by far the greater part of his earning on the advancement of learning, through the medium of the great institution for which he worked all his life. Thus it is that the study of biographies of men like Khuda Bakhsh yields the richest harvest to posterity, since there is traced in them the evolution of the mental processes and outlook, and also useful activities, of great public workers, calculated to exercise a healthy and stimulating influence on the mind of succeeding generations, emphasing thereby the great truth embodied by Wordsworth in his memorable lines: —

> "There is one great society alone on earth,
> the noble living and the noble dead."

Courtesy: Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries institution, with the result that that accomplished scholar and keen antiquarian, visited the Library in 1903. The sanction for the construction of a commodious reading-hall, and the preparation of the descriptive catalogue, under the supervision of Dr. Denison Ross, were the direct outcome of Lord Curzon's visit. During the decades that have followed since, the catalogue of the contents of the Library had been compiled by scholars, in numerous volumes, and printed by Government, and it was justly regarded by experts as a monumental reference work on the subjects it dealt with. I quote below Lord Curzon's remarks made by him in the visitor's book of the institution, in 1903, which are worthy of attention even now: — "While at Patna, I inspected with great pleasure the Library which the liberality of Khuda Bakhsh has presented to the public, and I was shown many of the rare and valuable treasures which it contains. I discussed with the generous donor the means by which the collection may be preserved from risk of fire, or any other danger, and by which its advantages may be made even more accessible than they now are to the reader and student. I hope that steps may be taken in both of these 'directions'. The Library had been long since a Government-aided institution, and is well maintained by a handsome grant made to it by the Provincial Government of Behar.

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Courtesy: Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries

Khuda Bakhsh

(1842 – 1908)

– By Prof. Qeyamuddin Ahmad

Khuda Bakhsh, son of Muhammad Bakhsh, was born at Chapra, District Saran (Bihar), on 2 August 1842. He came of an educated Hanafi Muslim family, originally belonging to Delhi but settled since long in Okhi, a village near Chapra. His father was a distinguished pleader and a bibliophile. Khuda Bakhsh studied in the Patna High School till 1859 but after its closure owing to the Rising of 1857-58 he moved over to Calcutta where he lived with Nawab Amir Ali Khan. He passed the Entrance examination from the Calcutta University in 1861. Returning to Patna, he served for some time as *Peshkar* to the District Judge and as a Sub-Inspector of Schools.

Khuda Bakhsh's first wife died childless; he married twice thereafter. One of his wives, Razia Khatoon, daughter of Shamsul Ulama Kabiruddin Ahmad, was a poetess (pen-name, Jamila) and an unpublished *Diwan* of her Urdu verses in seven volumes is preserved. He had five sons and one daughter; the eldest son, Salahuddin, made his mark as an Orientalist.

In 1868 Khuda Bakhsh passed the Pleadership examination and started practice at Patna. He soon built up a high professional reputation and a lucrative practice. He was appointed Government Pleader in 1881, and received the title of Khan Bahadur the same year. He was the first Vice-Chairman of the Patna Municipality and of the Patna District

Board. He was also a fellow of the Calcutta University. In 1903 the title of C.I.E. was conferred on him. He was appointed Chief Justice of the Hyderabad High Court (1895-98). After retirement he returned to Patna and resumed practice. He died on 3 August 1908 and was buried in the premises of the library built by him.

Khuda Bakhsh's title to fame rests mainly on the formation of the famous Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library. Located at Patna, it is one of the most valuable, largest collections of manuscripts and printed books on Islamic culture. Khuda Bakhsh began the work as a 'pious trust' from his father who bequeathed to him a modest collection of 1,400 manuscripts, and asked him to continue the work and build a library. The collection increased steadily and in 1888 Khuda Bakhsh got the present library building constructed and transferred the collection there. By a Trust Deed dated 14 January 1891, Khuda Bakhsh made over the Library to the Government of Bengal with a stipulation that the collection should never be moved out of Patna. The Library was formally opened by Sir Charles Elliott, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in 1891. In 1903 the Government of India appointed Khuda Bakhsh as a salaried Secretary of the Library and also extended him some financial help. In 1969, by an Act of Parliament the Library was declared an 'institution of national importance'. At the time of its inauguration the Library had 4,000 mss., now it contains about 10,000 mss., and about 50,000 printed books and journals.

Khuda Bakhsh built up the library with a rare, life-long devotion, and has rightly been called 'the Indian Bodley' by Professor Jadunath Sarkar, who has also recorded many of the 'romances' connected with the growth of the library in his 'Studies in Mughal India' (1919). In spite of his comparatively modest means, Khuda Bakhsh spared no expenditure or effort to acquire a good manuscript. He employed an experienced Arab book-hunter on remuneration plus commission basis to acquire mss. for him from Egypt, Arabia and Iran. He paid handsomely all those who brought him a manuscript and soon his fame spread all over the country, and it often enabled him to outwit people with greater resources.

There are 32 volumes of the *catalogue raisonné* of the library, besides handlists. Khuda Bakhsh himself prepared a descriptive catalogue of some Arabic and Persian mss. of the Library. Some of the more important and artistic works have been described by S. Khuda Bakhsh in '*Khuda Bakhsh : Founder of the Bankipore Oriental Public Library*', by J. N. Sarkar in '*Studies in Mughal India*', and by Scott O' Connor in '*An Eastern Library*' (Glasgow, 1920).

Khuda Bakhsh knew English and was a good scholar of Persian and Arabic. He was a poet and left behind four unpublished volumes of poems composed during the last five years of his life. He was also working on an autobiography but it remained incomplete and was lost. He wrote an article on Islamic bibliography in the *Ninteenth Century.*

Khuda Bakhsh was well-acquainted with some of the contemporary Orientalists and English officers. He admired some of the 'unqualified blessings' of the English rule, but also considered that the Western influence was responsible for the growth of religious scepticism among the educated classes and for the break-up of the traditional joint family system. He believed that 'social reform and intellectual advancement' deserved prior attention than political agitation.

Of average height and thin build, Khuda Bakhsh was fair-complexioned and bearded. He lived and dressed in Indian style.

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Courtesy Dictionary of National Biography

Khuda Bakhsh's Perception of Some Contemporary Political and Social Issues

— By Imtiaz Ahmad

The life span of Khan Bahadur Khuda Bakhsh (1842-1908) mainly covers the second half of the 19th century. The period was marked by major political changes and even turmoil, both in the Indian subcontinent and the Islamic world. The failure of the struggle of 1857 and the extinction of the Mughal dynasty that followed it, had deeply affected the muslim elite, both emotionally and politically in the form of the loss of power and influence that they had enjoyed earlier. The rise of nationalist sentiments in India, the coming to the fore of an educated middle-class and certain changes in administrative policy introduced by the British rulers in India had made the muslims feel that they were being displaced from their earlier pre-eminent position in the political life of the country. In the Islamic world at large muslim empires were on the decline. In particular, the Ottoman Empire was in its death-throes. The intervention of European imperial powers, notably Britain and Russia, had accelerated the process of its dismemberment. As a reaction to this, Sultan Abdul Hameed II had promoted friendly relations with Germany and developed a Pan-Islamic foreign policy which sought to revive the prestige of the Caliphate and unite muslims all over the world under the leadership of the Caliph. He had even sent his missionaries to India to mobilise support among the Indian muslims and incite them to rise up against the British.[1] At the turn of the 20th century, there were fresh stirrings in Asia and the victory of Japan over Russia in the War of 1904-05 had enthused nationalists in India and other parts of the world.

At the social level, perhaps the greatest change had been the spread of western education and ideas on a large scale. This had affected Indian society in general, including Indian muslims. On the one hand, there was now greater awareness of the need to educate the people and to make education more meaningful by bringing it in tune with the requirements of the changing times. On the other hand, some of the existing social norms and values were under sharp scrutiny. The muslims, in particular, smarting under the humiliation of loss of political power, were convinced that the existing social system was incapable of delivering the goods and there was urgent need for reforms. By the last quarter of the 19th century, a serious effort at promoting education and social reforms among the muslims had begun.

Educated and progressive muslims were ardently concerned about these issues; Khuda Bakhsh was no exception. It is rather sad that his political and social ideas have not come down to us directly in his own writings. However, his worthy son, Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh had elaborated these ideas in his long biographical essay on his father.[2] An attempt has been made in the present paper to analyse some of these ideas to have an understanding of Khuda Bakhsh's perception of some contemporary political and social issues. Such a study is indeed necessary to bring to light certain aspects of the personality of Khuda Bakhsh which have not received proper attention in most of the available writings on him.

On political issues, Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh has mentioned in particular his father's ideas on the benefits of British rule in India, the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), the attitude of some British civil servants and the need for hindu-muslim amity. In matters of social life, we find a mention of Khuda Bakhsh's attitude towards religion, that is, Islam; his assessment of the impact of western ideas on social life of the Indians; the emphasis he attached to education; his reservations about the manner in which western scholars wrote about Islam and the Prophet. There is also a mention of some attitudes in social life displayed by the muslims.

I have tried to examine some of the above-mentioned ideas and compare them with the opinions of some of the eminent contemporaries of Khuda Bakhsh, so as to place his opinions and views against a broader perspective. A beginning can be made with Khuda Bakhsh's perception of some social issues.

One can start with the first idea mentioned by Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh. He writes: "my father always deplored and deprecated the tendency of his countrymen to invent a pedigree or claim fanciful descent. He regarded such a tendency as the surest sign of national decadence and demoralization, and the last refuge of the unworthy and the incompetent."[3]

Significantly, the eminent 'Wahhabi' leader and author of the *Tazkira-e-Sadiqa,*[4] Moulvi Abdur Raheem, in the introduction to this work expresses similar sentiments. These may be summarised as: "O Readers, you should never suffer from any pride, arrogance or vanity regarding your high lineage and noble birth... it is only through good conduct that a man becomes noble (exalted)... exalted birth is of no worth without (good) conduct... I pray to God that this intention of mine is truly reflected in my writing and I confine myself to the statement of facts and truth without straying into vain notions of noble lineage."[5] At the same time, we have a totally different example in the writings of the noted contemporary poet Shad Azimabadi. As is well-known, Shad wrote a history of Bihar in Urdu for presentation to the Prince of Wales on the occasion of the latter's visit to Patna. He devoted full four pages of the introduction to an account of his ancestors on the paternal as well as maternal side and concluded: "the author and his descendants are the only *legitimate* (emphasis added) offshoots (sic) of Nawab Siraju'd Daulah."[6]

It appears that the traditional values laying emphasis on birth and lineage and the more progressive opinion ignoring such ideas existed simultaneously. The more puritanical opinion, incidentally but quite strikingly, was in keeping with the latest progressive view. In the case of Khuda Bakhsh, it seems that both the puritanical and the more progressive views simultaneously influenced him. His exposure to liberal western ideas are too well-known to need specific mention here; but the streak of puritanical simplicity is evident in some of his other ideas, notably on the observance of Muharram. His son writes: "On the 10th Muharram my father never allowed us children to see the Mohurram procession, which he regarded as a mockery and travesty of religion, and for which he never found language sufficiently condemnatory. He thought it wicked to a degree to convert the anniversary of one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Islam into a day of carnival and festivity."[7]

We may now turn to Khuda Bakhsh's views on education. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh observes : "Kazi Reza Husain,[8] Moulvi Mohammad Hasan[9] and my father constitute a noble trio... animated by one common desire – the social, moral and intellectual amelioration of their co-religionists – they worked together with perfect harmony and earnest zeal, and achieved substantial results... Not to speak of a number of

Muslim students whom they educated at their own expenses, they successfully combated that unreasoning and unreasonable Orthodoxy which regarded with distrust and suspicion the spread of English education. It was they who first lighted the lamp of learning in Bihar."[10]

Significantly, when Moulvi Mohammad Hasan set up the Mohammadan Education Committee at Patna in 1884, Khuda Bakhsh was one its founder-members.[11] It is also interesting to note that the Mohammadan Education Committee was established after — and as a consequence of — Sir Syed's visit to Patna in 1883 (January)[12] and the constitution of the Committee was drafted by Syed Mahmud, a son of Sir Syed and a Judge at the Allahabad High Court.[13] One on the earliest achievements of the Mohammadan Education Committee was the setting up of the Mohammadan Anglo-Arabic School at Patna City in 1884. On the lines of the M.A.O.College, Aligarh, it tried to strike a balance between Oriental learning and Western education. It provided for religious instructions both for muslims and hindus, a fact which encouraged several guardians to withdraw their wards from the Patna City High School, a government school under a European head-master, where religious instructions were not permitted, and to get them enrolled at the new school.[14]

Thus, it appears that Khuda Bakhsh and his close associates were strongly influenced by the ideas and programme of Sir Syed in promotion of western education among muslims. There are other common points in their ideas, for example, the emphasis on inculcating a rational outlook and promoting character-building through education, besides the persistent struggle that they waged against orthodox and obscurantist ideas that obstructed the growth of education among muslims.[15]

Khuda Bakhsh was an ardent advocate of modern education, but he was also concerned about its effects which, in his opinion, were negative in two important respects. It was the reason for 'growing religious scepticism, agnosticism and even atheism in educated circles'. However, he considered it a mere passing phase, to be followed by the return of an 'orthodoxy of a perhaps more reasonable and permanent character.'[16] He was also concerned about the impact of new ideas on social life of the Indians in general, and the muslims in particular. In his opinion, these ideas were completely transforming the domestic life of the educated Indian and 'steadily undermining the basis of Eastern family life.'[17] He was particularly concerned about the collapse of the joint family system. A somewhat junior contemporary of Khuda Bakhsh, Mr. Badrul Hasan[18] has made some identical comments on the impact of western education and the new ideas it promoted on the social life of the muslims. But he also makes the very interesting comment that it is not western education that leads to Anglicised way of life; that is more because of "bad upbringing and neglect of one's own culture."[19] It might as well as be added that Khuda Bakhsh himself was typically Oriental in his dress, demeanour and way of living. He thus stood for a harmony between the modern and the traditional.

Khuda Bakhsh was devout muslim. To quote his son: "His whole view of life was deeply coloured by religion. Resignation to the Will of God was his watch-word, and never was his faith shaken, however bitter the trial, however acute the suffering... In Islam he found a religion which set before its followers an ideal neither too difficult to attain nor at the same time impossible to realise... It was one of his deepest regrets that he could never visit the two holy cities of Mekka and Madina... For the Prophet and his family he entertained the most devout reverence, and to the last he never missed the five daily prayers."[20] Further, "he regretted the spirit in which the life of the Prophet and the history of Islam were treated by European writers, and he was firmly persuaded that it was almost impossible for Western writers to do full justice to, or to handle, either of these subjects in a dispassionate spirit."[21] These words clearly show that Khuda Bakhsh's religious and social outlook was decidedly Islamic and while he appreciated the benefits of western education, he was equally well aware of its shortcomings and pitfalls.

Khuda Bakhsh was neither a fanatic nor a bigot. He was extremely liberal. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh narrates that his father did not appreciate, or agree with, some of his views regarding Islam; yet he never imposed his views on the son. He simply asked him to read further and broaden his understanding. He held the followers of other faith in high esteem and was tolerant of other opinions.

In political matters, Khuda Bakhsh displayed a very strong feeling of appreciation of the advantages of British rule. To quote Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh again: "he was firmly persuaded that English rule was an unqualified blessing for India, and that its withdrawal would at once evoke the undying passions of opposing creeds and all the smouldering ambitions of the warlike races. In other words, India, without the English, would become the theatre of the wildest anarchy and the scene of the most unspeakable horror."[22] On the positive side he felt that the British rule had facilitated "the enlargement of the intellectual outlook, the impetus to trade and commerce, the general and widespread prosperity of the country and the people, a universal sense of security of person and property, the growth of civic life and its necessary concomitants, the unmistakable progress towards the recognition of the rights and status of women."[23] One finds these ideas strikingly similar to those of the great moderate leader, Gopal Krishna Gokhale who said: "the introduction of western education with its liberalising influence has been a great blessing to the people... We now understand the advantage of better treatment for all... Railways, telegraphs, post offices and other modern appliances of industrial civilization have also been introduced into India by the present rulers and it is fair to acknowledge that these things have added greatly to the comforts and conveniences of life and are a powerful help to progress."[24] Gokhale also spoke of 'blessings of peace and order', equal treatment for all and the improvement in the status of women.[25] Sir Syed held identical views. To quote his first authentic biographer, Maulana Altaf Husain Hali, "he (Sir Syed) firmly believed that no government could be better for India than that of the English, and if India was to make any progress it could do so only under British rule."[26] Further, "British rule was too powerful and well-established to be overthrown." It should be borne in mind that these appreciative comments on British rule were made in a particular context. The erosion of Mughal authority, and the depredations of the Marathas that followed it, had caused much suffering and disorder almost all over the country. The rise of regional powers and their mutual conflicts as well as the conflict with the British had caused much uncertainty. The failure of the struggle of 1857 followed by certain changes in British administrative policy had brought about major and positive changes in the political life of the country. It was but natural for these leaders to appreciate these positive changes and the policies of the rulers that had contributed to these developments.

A major event that affected eastern India in particular and also had long lasting influence on the muslim mind in India occurred towards the close of Khuda Bakhsh's life: the *Swadeshi* movement which began in Bengal in 1905 in opposition to the partition of the province and soon spread to other parts of the country. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh has recorded his father's reaction to it in these words : "With the Swadeshi movement, namely, the movement which aims at reviving the faded industries and forgotten arts and crafts of India, he was in perfect sympathy, but he had nothing but unmixed contempt for the movement which under cover of promoting native industries avowedly has for its end and aim the excitement of racial jealousy and racial hatred."[27] It would be interesting once again to make a comparison with Gokhale. In a speech delivered at Lucknow in February 1907, Gokhale praised the Swadeshi movement for the emphasis on indigenous crafts but also cautioned: "Unfortunately, the word boycott has a sinister meaning and it implies a vindictive desire to injure others no matter what harm you may thereby cause to yourself."[28]

Khuda Bakhsh was a firm believer in the concept of hindu-muslim unity. An interesting fact about him is his abstinence from beef-eating. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh recorded that Muhammad Bakhsh, the father of Khuda Bakhsh had a Brahim lady as his wet-nurse.[29] In deference to her sentiments, Muhammad Bakhsh never ate beef; Khuda Bakhsh followed his father. Khuda Bakhsh also played an active part in resolving the problem relating to slaughter of cows by muslims in the wake of the anti-cow slaughter agitation in 1893.[30] One finds an interesting parallel in Sir Syed's attitude who prohibited cow-slaughter in the premises of the M. A. O. College. His words were significant: "I have repeatedly given my community to understand that it is a folly to annoy our Hindu brothers by resorting to cow-slaughter. If friendship can be established between us, then it is far better than cow-slaughter."[31] It may be added that Khuda Bakhsh received a letter of appreciation from the Governor Lieutenant Sir Anthony Macdonell[32] in recognition of his role in the amicable settlement of a dispute related to anti-cow-slaughter agitation in Bihar.

An important international event that interested Khuda Bakhsh was the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). He followed its course with considerable interest.[33] However, his perception about its consequences were fairly different. The war is generally taken to be a landmark in Asian history. Several scholars have averred that the victory of an Asian power over a European came as a shot in the arm for the anti-colonial struggle then going on in Asia. Even Jawaharlal Nehru in the Discovery of India maintained that the nationalists were electrified. Khuda Bakhsh, however, felt that the nationalist sentiment would not be strengthened by such isolated events. Instead, the progress of education and the gradual involvement of Indians in matter of government would lead to the deliverance of the Indian people.[34] He appreciated those British administrators and policy-makers who 'trusted and encouraged the Indians, sympathised with their hopes and aspirations;' he was unhappy with those who displayed 'superior Olympic or cold repulsive mannerisms, rough blunt ways.' He seemed to be in full agreement with Sir Syed who similarly believed that "the future prosperity of India lay in the active participation of Indians in the administration and in the full acknowledgement of their political rights and duties in a constitutional manner."[35]

Significantly, Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh has not mentioned his father's attitude towards the problems of the Ottoman empire and the Pan-Islamic policy. This was a question that concerned a large section of muslims in India. At the sametime, there was also a strong opinion opposed to it. Sir Syed, in particular, was strongly opposed to such activities and professed loyalty to the British government. Khuda Bakhsh, perhaps, held similar views; hence his lack of interest in such ideas.

To conclude, Khuda Bakhsh's political and social vision was very much in conformity to the predominant trend of moderate, liberal opinion of the later 19th century in India, both among the muslims and hindus. He believed in the advantages of British rule, appreciated the need to extend support and cooperation to the rulers and expected in return, political concessions from their side. He firmly believed that this would lead to the emancipation of the Indians as a whole. He ardently believed in hindu-muslim unity and advocated amity between the two major communities of this great country. A devout and deeply religious muslim, he was neither a fanatic nor a bigot and held other faiths in high esteem. He was tolerant of dissent and showed utmost respect and concern for the sentiments and susceptibilities of others. He was convinced of the benefits of western education and modern ideas and was keen to adopt them. Yet he was conscious of the glorious heritage of the Orient and the need for a synthesis between the two. His attitude has been most aptly summed up by his son in the following sentence: "He took a liberal and extended view of religion — a practical view of politics."

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Khuda Bakhsh: A Bibliophile of International Reputation

-- By Dr.N.M.P.Srivastava

Khuda Bakhsh, the founder of the Bankipore Oriental Public Library, was a bibliophile of international repute. He held the view that there were three classes of blindmen – those who were bereft of sight; those who lent valuable books even to a friend; and those who returned such volumes[1], once they had passed into their possession. The British Museum had made a lofty offer to him for the valuable collection which he declined it. He told Sir Ali Imam, "I am a poor man and the sum they offered me was a princely fortune, but could I ever part for money with that to which my father and I have dedicated our lives? – No the collection is for Patna, and the gift shall be laid at the feet of the Patna public."[2]

Khuda Bakhsh was born at Chapra on August 2, 1842 and soon after his birth the family moved to Bankipore (Patna).[3] He got his early education in Patna High School where he studied till 1859. The school was abolished that year as a result of disturbances followed by the first war of India's independence and Khuda Bakhsh has then to join Calcutta University from where he passed in 1861 the entrance examination. He returned to Bankipore as the climate of Calcutta never agreed with him. He studied law in Patna and joined the Patna Bar in 1868. In 1877 he obtained a certificate of honour at the Delhi Durbar for his work on the school committee and when in 1883 Lord Ripon created local self-governing bodies, he was appointed the first chairman of Patna

Municipality and of the Patna District Board.[4] In January 1883 he was appointed Chief Justice of the Nizam High Court in Hyderabad where he continued till 1898.

The Bankipore Oriental Library,[5] known as Khuda Bakhsh Library, was opened to public in 1891 by the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sir Charles Elliott. In fact, the idea of founding a library was floated before the vision of his father, Muhammad Bakhsh, a distinguished pleader of Patna, who spent a greater portion of income in purchasing manuscripts. At the time of death in 1876 the Mss. numbered 1,400 and at his death bed Muhammad Bakhsh entrusted them to Khuda Bakhsh asking him to convert his library for the use of the community. Khuda Bakhsh never forgot this pious trust and fulfilled his father's desire. In appreciation of his public spirit as a founder of the library, a Companionship of the Order of the Indian Empire (C.I.E.) was conferred on him in 1903 and the British Government appointed him Secretary of the Library on a salary of Rs.200 and granted him Rs.8,000 for liquidation of his debts.

Khuda Bakhsh Library is one of the finest collections of Islamic literature in the world. It is rich in rare manuscripts in Arabic and Persian languages and written by eminent calligraphists of the Muslim countries. In the words of V.C.Scott O'Connor, "In truth there is nothing in the world to surpass the exquisite calligraphy, the enamelled gold, the priceless miniature, the colours of lapis lazuli and vermilion, of indigo and scarlet, green, purple, cinnabar and saffron, of some of these illustrating pages."[6] The priceless collections of the library include *Jahangir's fortune telling* with the marginal notes in the Emperor's own hand stating when and with what result he consulted his oracle; *Shahnama* of Firdausi; *Kitab-ul*

Hashaish written in the 11th century; *Yusuf wa Zulaikha,* copied by the greatest of Persian calligraphists, Mir Ali, for which Jahangir paid 1,000 gold mohars; *Ranjit Singh's military account book* with entries in Persian and Gurumukhi presented by Ali Mardan Khan to Shah Jahan; works of Khosru containing the seal of Akbar's mother Hamida Banu Begam; *history of Timur's dynasty* down to the 22nd year of Akbar's reign. "My father" says Salahuddin, "had a peculier weakness for fine binding. He insisted on his books being excellently bound, and the library can boast of rare specimens not only of oriental but also of European binding."[6] It was the will of Khuda Bakhsh that the manuscripts should not be removed from Patna, which was broken once for king George V when *Shahnama* and *Padshahnama* were sent to Delhi for the perusal of king George V and Queen Mary on the occasion of Delhi Darbar in 1911.

Sir, Jadunath Sarkar in an article "Khuda Bakhsh the Indian Bodley" says that Khuda Bakhsh was one of the greatest authorities on Islamic bibliography and his whole heart was set on the development of library. Khuda Bakhsh believed that the Prophet has himself visited the library. Jadunath Sarkar recorded a dream of Khuda Bakhsh to this effect. "One night, I dreamt that the lane near the library was filled with a dense crowd of people. When I came out of my house they cried out. The Prophet is on a visit to your library, and you are not there to show him round. I hastened to the manuscript room and found him gone. But there were two manuscripts of the Hadis lying open on the table. These, the people said, had been read by the Prophet."[8] Both these volumes now contain a note by Khuda Bakhsh stating that they are never to be allowed to go out of the library; but no reason has been given for the prohibition.

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Hashaish written in the 11th century; *Yusuf wa Zulaikha*, copied by the greatest of Persian calligraphists, Mir Ali, for which Jahangir paid 1,000 gold mohars; *Ranjit Singh's military account book* with entries in Persian and Gurumukhi presented by Ali Mardan Khan to Shah Jahan; works of Khosru containing the seal of Akbar's mother Hamida Banu Begam; *history of Timur's dynasty* down to the 22nd year of Akbar's reign. "My father" says Salahuddin, "had a peculier weakness for fine binding. He insisted on his books being excellently bound, and the library can boast of rare specimens not only of oriental but also of European binding."[6] It was the will of Khuda Bakhsh that the manuscripts should not be removed from Patna, which was broken once for king George V when *Shahnama* and *Padshahnama* were sent to Delhi for the perusal of king George V and Queen Mary on the occasion of Delhi Darbar in 1911.

Sir, Jadunath Sarkar in an article "Khuda Bakhsh the Indian Bodley" says that Khuda Bakhsh was one of the greatest authorities on Islamic bibliography and his whole heart was set on the development of library. Khuda Bakhsh believed that the Prophet has himself visited the library. Jadunath Sarkar recorded a dream of Khuda Bakhsh to this effect. "One night, I dreamt that the lane near the library was filled with a dense crowd of people. When I came out of my house they cried out. The Prophet is on a visit to your library, and you are not there to show him round. I hastened to the manuscript room and found him gone. But there were two manuscripts of the Hadis lying open on the table. These, the people said, had been read by the Prophet."[8] Both these volumes now contain a note by Khuda Bakhsh stating that they are never to be allowed to go out of the library; but no reason has been given for the prohibition.

About the romance of Khuda Bakhsh's book collection, Jadunath Sarkar writes, "There are many romances connected with the growth and history of the library. The most precious Mss. in India were undoubtedly those of the Mughal library in Delhi. Thither, through the16th and 17th centuries, came all rare and fine specimens of calligraphy and illumination in the East. Some were purchased, others were executed by artists retained in the Imperial service, some were secured by conquest (as of Golconda and Hyderabad in Aurangzeb's reign), and many by the confiscation of the goods of great nobles on their death. On the death of Akbar's poet-laureate Faizi, his 4,300 volumes were added to the Emperor's library. Thus was formed the largest library in the east in that period; for, while Central Asia, Persia and Arabia were torn by incessant wars India enjoyed peace under the Great Mughals. In the 18th century many of this found their way to the library of the Nawabs of Oudh. But the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 brought about the fall of Delhi and Lucknow. The Imperial and Nawabi treasures were dispersed. The Nawab of Rampur (Rohilkhand) who had joined the English got the best of the loot, as he had proclaimed among the victorious loyal sepoys that he would pay one rupee for every Mss. brought to him. Khuda Bakhsh began his collection much later; but there was the greatest rivalry between him and the Nawab. At last Khuda Bakhsh won over from the Nawab's side that jewel of a book hunter, an Arab named Mohamed Maqi paid him regular salary of Rs.50 a month (besides commission) for 18 years, and employed him in searching rare Mss. (mostly Arabic) in Syria, Arabia, Egypt and Persia (specially at Beirut and Cairo). It was Khuda Bakhsh's invariable practice to pay the double railway fare to every manuscript seller who visited Bankipore whether he bought anything from him or not. Thus his fame spread throughout India. and he was given the first choice of every Mss. on sale in any part of the country.

"Curiously enough, one year the library was broken open by a former book binder and some of the best Mss. stolen. The thief sent them for sale to a broker or merchant at Lahore, and the latter unsuspectingly offered them to Khuda Bakhsh as the likeliest person to buy them. So, in the end the honest man came by his own and the thief was punished."[7]

"In another case", Jadunath Sarkar writes, "divine justice was secured by a similar roundabout process. Mr.J.B.Eliot, Provincial Judge of Patna (a great book collector and donor to the Bodleian), borrowed a unique Mss. of the Odes of Kamaluddin Ismail Isfahani from Muhammad Bakhsh and afterwards refused to return it, offering a large price for it. The owner indignantly declined, but held his peace. When Mr.Eliot retired he packed his choicest Mss. in some cases and shipped them to England, while his worthless books were put in another case and left at Patna to be sold by auction. But by the irony of fate, or the hand of God, call it what you will not only the extorted volume of Odes in some other rare Mss. (such as the *Majalis-i-Khamsa* bearing Shahjahan's autograph) had got into the wrong case, and Muhammad Bakhsh bought them. On reaching England Mr.Eliot discovered his mistake, but only to fret and fume in vain."

"One day when Khuda Bakhsh was driving back from the High Court at Hyderabad, his eyes, ever on the look out for books, discovered a bundle of volumes on a sack of flour in a grocer's shop. He stopped, turned the books over and asked about the price. The owner shrewdly answered, 'To any other man I should have sold these old and rotten papers for Rs.3. But as your lordship is interested in them they must contain something of value. I want Rs.20 for them.' A true guess, for alongwith some worthless things the bundle contained an old work on Arabic bibliography not to be found elsewhere. Immediately after Khuda Bakhsh's purchase, Rs.400 were offered for it by the Nizam, but in vain."[10]

Although Khuda Bakhsh did not take part in the battle for freedom he was not untouched with the political upheaval in the country. He believed in liberalism and held the view that the energy expended and the time wasted on political propaganda might profitably be employed on social reference and intellectual advancement, without which politics were barren intellectual and unavailing. He believed that the Indians must possess honesty, straightforwardness, self-respect, self-reliance, respect for womanhood, regard for religion, fellow-feeling and mutual toleration before making a demand for self-government. He had full sympathy with the Swadeshi movement[11] as a movement which aims at reviving the faded industries and forgotten arts but not as a movement aimed at the excitement of racial hatred. He never attached any importance to the wild excesses perpetrated in Bengal but he believed that throughout the country people were excited over non-consideration of their claims and wishes. He watched with keen interest the Russo-Japanese War[12] and the victory of Japan over Russia. To quote Salahuddin. "He took a lively interest in the Russo-Japanese War, and in his letter of the 1st of November 1906, he writes to me, 'My house is a solitary confinement in holidays, and I regret to say that the first volume of the Russo-Japanese War which I have been reading is now over." He did not, like some other writers, ascribe this new phase of thought to the victories of Japan, but mainly to the growth of education among the people. India has been suddenly drawn into the main current of European thought, and the influence of European civilization has had a pronounced and decisive influence over her. English is universally studied out here, even to the neglect and exclusion of Arabic and Sanskrit. People have suddenly risen from their long slumber and seen before them the dazzling brilliance of European civilization, and the majestic march of democratic ideas. This being the position of affairs educated Indians, secretly if not openly, recent the social distinctions and social disabilities which divide them from their rulers. They naturally crave, so he thought, for a share in shaping the policy of the Government, and a fair representation in the higher offices of the State. True, this feeling is yet confined to a narrow and limited class of educated men, but decade by decade education is fast increasing, and is penetrating larger and larger areas. It was here, more than anywhere else, that my father saw a source of danger alike to the people and the Government. Nevertheless, he hoped that as time went by, Government would make greater concessions and allow greater privileges to the people than it is, at present, prepared to concede."[13]

Khuda Bakhsh was not only an accomplished Arabic and Persian scholar but had equal command over English literature. He never neglected his studies. He would retire to his library just after returning from the court and had made a point not to attend to professional work after sunset. He was a deeply religious man and after the morning prayer he would regularly read the Quran for half an hour. He breathed his last on August 3, 1908 and was buried within the precinct of the library. "There", says Salahuddin, "amid all associations which the library enshrines, there under the shadow of that literary pantheon in the exalted companionship of the great writers of Islam, he rests at the end of his life's voyage. A more fitting or a more worthy place could not have been selected for him."[14]

References :

1. Dr. N. M. P. Srivastava, "Khuda Bakhsh's passion for book", The Searchlight, January 28, 1979.
2. O'Connor, V. C. Scott, *An Eastern Library* – An introduction to Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library., Glasgow, 1920, p.9.
3. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh, the eldest son of Khuda Bakhsh in his essay "*My Father: His life and Reminiscences*" has given an account of his family. It was included in his book *Essays – Indian and Islamic,* Probathain & Co., London, WC., 1912, Salahuddin. He says, "In my grandfather's Bayadh, written in a fine *Shikasta Amiz Nastaliq,* I find an account of our family. (Mss. Bankipore Library). Besides the passage in the Bayadh I have no other authority, so far, which connects our family with 'Kazi Hibatullah, one of the compilers of the *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri,* and curiously enough the passage under discussion does not throw any light as to who Kazi Hibatullah, our ancestor, was. This much is clear that, our family originally came from Delhi, settled down at Chapra, and eventually moved to Bankipore. It is also clear that from the earliest times the members of our family have been, more or less, noted for learning, and as such were men of position and influence. My father never set much value on unauthenticated traditions, and believed more in personal distinction and individual merit than in proud pedigrees or fanciful descent."
4. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh, *Essays Indian and Islamic*, p.147.
5. The then State Government of Bengal was made the trustee of the library and, when Bihar was separated from Bengal in 1912, the Government of Bihar as successor state became the trustee. Since its opening the library continued to be controlled by a managing committee appointed by the State Government. It was in 1962 that, as a prelude to a new arrangement, a high-powered board, constituted by the Government of India, took over its control. Finally, in December 1969, Parliament passed an Act, *the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library Act,* which declared the library an Institution of National Importance, and the management was completely transferred to the control of the Government of India, who, after constituting a twelve-member board, are running the

library through the Department of Culture.

6. V. C. Scott O'Connor, *Ibid.*, p.6; Mr. O'Connor has catalogued the rare collections of the library with illustrations.
7. Salahuddin Khuda Bakḥsh, *Ibid.*, p.182.
8. *Modern Review,* September, 1908, p.247.
9. *Ibid.*, p.249.
10. *Ibid.*, p.250.
11. Swadeshi movement was launched in 1905 in the wake of the partition of Bengal.
12. For details about Russo-Japanese War see a chapter "Russo-Japanese War : a factor in the political Awakening", N. M. P. Srivastava, *Growth of Nationalism in India : Effects of International Events,* Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1973, pp.1-10; also *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* vol. VIII No.2, 1968-69, pp.99-108.
13. Salahuddin, *op. Cit.*, pp.171-72.
14. *Ibid.*, p.203.

Courtesy Journal of the Bihar Puravid Parishad: Vols. XIII-XIV 1989-90

The Bankipur Khuda Bakhsh Library

-- By S. M. Imamuddin

The Indo-Pak Bangladesh Sub-continent ruled by Muslims for about seven hundred years is very rich in libraries having Arabic and Persian manuscripts. During the period of two hundred years of their rule in India the British removed many treasures of library and artistic interest from the libraries and museums of the Sub-continent to Britain and preserved them in India Office Library, British Museum and other libraries and museums of the country. Still what is left behind and preserved in the libraries and museums of the Sub-continent speaks highly of literary and artistic pursuits of the Indian Muslims. Of these libraries the Khuda Bakhsh, the Rampur and the Asafiyah are the richest and the biggest standing first, second and third in order of importance.

The Khuda Bakhsh library, modestly named the Patna Oriental Public Library, is one of the finest collections of Muslim literature in the world. It is the only library of oriental collections in the Sub-continent which has descriptive catalogues in 31 volumes. The catalogues of Asafiyah library and of the Calcutta Asiatic Society Library are also printed but they are not very descriptive. The library owes its origin to Maulvi Muhammad Bakhsh Khan, who at the time of his death in July 1876 left a collection of fourteen hundred volumes. In 1891 when the library was opened to the public, it contained nearly four thousand manuscripts whose number rose to more than six thousand by 1908, the year the work of cataloguing was undertaken.

Muhammad Bakhsh, the father of Khuda Bakhsh, one of whose ancestors had assisted the Emperor 'Alamgir in compiling the *Fatawa-i-'Alamgiri,* was an advocate at Patna by career and a scholar and a poet by nature. Inheriting three hundred oriental books he built up a collection of fourteen hundred which he left for his son Khuda Bakhsh, who was an advocate and judge by profession, an enviable position in British India. He travelled extensively throughout India in search of Arabic and Persian manuscripts. Soon fame as a collection of rare literary documents attracted scholars and owners of treasured books. He employed eminent persons for collecting book and rare articles. Of his emissaries an 'Arab ransacked the libraries of Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad and cities in Arabia and Persia for long eighteen years. Although not very handsomely paid his annual salary having never exceeded forty pound, the 'Arab worked sincerely and acquired a huge and valuable treasure for him, sometimes even by adopting unfair means which Khuda Bakhsh himself admitted while relating the story of collection of manuscripts to O' Connor, who had an opportunity of meeting Shibli Nu'mani, the great Oriental scholar at the residence of Khuda Bakhsh in 1920. During his observation on the sources of his collection the owner of the library added "that there were three classes of blind men, viz., those who were bereft of sight; those who lent valuable books even to a friend, and those who returned such volumes, once they had passed into their possession."[1] The collection to which the father and son dedicated their lives Khuda Bakhsh declined to part with when he was offered a princely fortune by British Museum authorities. "No" he said, "the Collection is for Patna and the gift shall be laid at the feet of the Patna public."[2]

Khuda Bakhsh was born at Chhapra in North Bihar and died at Patna at the age of 66 in 1908 and buried within the library compound between the two buildings.

Under the general supervision of Sir Edward Denison Ross Maulvi 'Abdul Maqtadir[3], and Maulvi Kamaluddin were engaged in preparing the Catalogues in 1904. Kamaluddin and 'Abdul Muqtadir before joining the new appointments had prepared a catalogue raisonne of the Arabic and Persian manuscripts in the Calcutta Madrasah published in 1905. At the end of his two-year term Kamaluddin joined Chittagong Madrasah as Superintendent and Dr. 'Azimuddin Ahmad was appointed in his place. A descriptive list of some more valuable Persian manuscripts, 124 in number, was prepared by 'Abdul Muqtadir and 250 of such Arabic manuscripts by 'Abdul Hamid for the use of O'Connor and inclusion in his memoir '*An Eastern Library*'.

Of the rare and valuable manuscripts of the library a selected few are described below:

The *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuriyah* (History of the Timurid family) is a unique copy of the library. It is a transcript from the *Zafar Namah* of Sharf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi and the famous Memoirs of Babar and ending with the nineteen years of Akbar's reign which the author wrote as an eye witness. It is priceless as a work of art as this volume is embellished with 133 illuminated folio pages having painters' name inscribed at the bottom of each page.

The Persian painter from Shiraz, Khwajah 'Abdul al-Samad rose to high position under Akbar. It was he who taught Humayun to write and paint. Due to his skill of eye and hand he was called *Shirin Qalam.* 'Abd al-Samad's name is not inscribed in any of these miniatures, which were drawn and painted by more than thirty of his pupils, if not by himself. Of the painters' names inscribed therein thirteen out of seventeen were painters of Akbar's court as recorded by Abu'l Fadl. Of the battle pictures one relates Timur's campaign against Baghdad in 1400 A.C. Among other eye catching miniatures are the scenes of the festivities at the birth of Humayun for whom Babur was to offer up his own life as a sacrifice and also that of the birth of Akbar and rejoicing of the father and women around. There is a painting of Jaimal's death at the siege of Chitor by Akbar. On the colophon page of this manuscript there is a note by Shah Jahan addressing Akbar as *Shah Baba* and the name of Francis Gladwin, the historian and oriental scholar of Warren Hastings time, is inscribed upon a corner of the page bearing Shah Jahan's autograph. It was purchased for Rupees eight thousand as indicated in a note in Persian on the colophon page.

There is a beautiful illustrated manuscript of the *Padshahnamah*, the history of Shah Jahan's reign. The picture drawn there give clear landmark difference from the picture of the earlier manuscripts having more Indian influence on the faces of the Mughals and the scenes depicted. The siege of Chitor by Akbar and the funeral procession of Shah Jahan to the Taj Mahal are some of the important pictures drawn there.

The unique copy of the *Shahanshah Namah* of Husaini is a history of the 'Uthmani Turks written at the close of 16th century and presented to Sultan Muhammad III. From the Turkish royal library of Constantinople it passed on to the Mughal library during the time of Shah Jahan. It bears seals and autographs of the princes of the time and a rare one of Jahanara, the daughter of Shah Jahan. Its paintings are different from those of Persian and Indian types described earlier. There is a clear mark of Byzantine influence in these paintings the scenes whereof are of universal type relating to the history of world.

There is a manuscript of Firdausi's *Shah Namah* illustrated with Persian miniatures. It is incomplete having 10,000 verses and transcribed not before 1539. It was presented to Shah Jahan by 'Ali Mardan Khan, Governor of Kabul and Kashmir. Written in clear *Nastaliq* it has four gold-ruled columns and a double-page full-sized miniature with exquisite borders and coloured flowers etc. There is also another illuminated copy of *Shahnamah* adorned with Chinese design.

The Khuda Bakhsh library is especially rich in fine copies of Jami's works. The autographs and seals of former owner of a Jami's book have been obliterated to conceal the source from which it was removed to this library. The *Matal'ul Anwar* containing four pictures is the most valuable in the library according to Sir Edward Denison Ross.

Jami's *Yusuf-wa-Zulaykha* (Joseph and Potiphar's wife) transcribed in 1523 by the famous calligrapher Mir 'Ali of Harat was presented by the Khan-i-Khanan 'Abdur Rahim to Jahangir. It valued a thousand gold mohurs before the presentation. There is another illuminated copy of Yusuf-wa-Zulaykha transcribed by the celebrated calligrapher Mir 'Imad, who lived during the reign of Shah 'Abbas of Persia and was killed in 1615 seven years after its completion.

A rare copy of the lyrics of Hafiz was consulted by Humayun and Jahangir and even by the Cold Puritan *Aurangzeb* with the notes of the Mughal emperors, who used it at critical moments and in misfortunes in 1555-1609. Hafiz's work copied in 1023/1614 by Muhammad Muhsin was brought from the library of Qutub Shah of Gulkonda as a part of spoils by Aurangzeb.

The only extant copy of the Diwan of Kamran is in this library. It was copied by the celebrated calligrapher Mahmud ibn Ishaq al-shihabi of Harat, who was second only to Mir 'Ali. The Ms., which once belonged to the library of Mun'im Khan Khanan, governor of Jaunpur under Akbar, has autograph notes of the Emperors, Jahangir (dated 20th year of his reign – 1035 A.H.), Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, Shah 'Alam and also of Nur Jahan. There is also preserved the autograph copy of *Safinatul-Auliya* by Dara Shikoh in this Library.

The embellished and illuminated copies of Sa'di's *Bustan* and *Gulistan*, some copied by calligraphist like Mir 'Imad and some others of Shiraz, are preserved there depicting scenes. There is a collection of some verses of old Omar interspersed with others of Hafiz with beautiful miniatures depicting early Chinese influence on the Persian miniatures. The scene depicted therein of beautiful gardens, rich carpets, coloured and encausticked walls and emblazoned portals clearly proves the drawing based on Chinese technique. There is a picture of Shirin with her ladles on horse-back in search of Farhad. Besides this there is an *Anthology* from thirteen poets written for the Sultan Qutb Shah of Gulkonda. The copy of the *Diwan* of Hasan Dihlawi, which once formed the treasure of Shaykh Farid's Library (Lahore and Ahmadabad), is in the Khuda Bakhsh library.[4] There is a copy of the Persian translation of the Turkish Memoirs of Babar by 'Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan. It has three volumes of the *Iqbal Namah-i-Jahangiri*, the first two being very rare and an autograph copy of *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin* of Ghulam Husain.

There are also austere treatises on Medicine and Surgery, on Philosophy and Science. There are copies of *Kitab al-Mushajjar* of Ibn Masaway (d.857), the personal physician of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mansur and the Kitab al Mansuri of

Abu Bakr al-Razi (Rhazes) to whom is attributed the oldest account extant of small pox and measles. The *Kitab al-Hashaish* written in the 11th century on the materia medica of Dioscorides, the Botanist of Cilicia in the time of Nero, became model for subsequent ages. The copy is embellished with coloured illustrations.

A copy of the *Qura'n* was transcribed by Yaqut al-Musta'simi with his autograph at the close of 668/1254. The words are written in three styles of writing namely *Naskh*, *Raihan* and *Thulth* and the copy is embellished with gold and floral designs. Its beautiful blue and gold frantispiece is in *Tughra*. There is another copy of the *Qura'n*, a large folio with a Persian commentary in margins. Its chapter begins with a double-page each of which is distinct from the subsequent one in decoration and colour. Here the artist has proved the genious of his heart and mind and of his eyes too. The oldest volume of the library is a copy of the *Qura'n* written without dots in the third century of Hijri era. There is also a copy of the *Qura'n* on a parchment roll-written in minute *Naskh* and sprinkled throughout with gold dust.

The library possesses a copy of the *Hadith* written in *Naskh* in 811/1408 at Ikdalah near Rangpur for Sultan Husain Shah of Bengal. Here each paragraph is marked by a circular gold medallion upon the margin with illuminated rays and chapter headings are written in delicate letters of gold. There are other embellishments of this princely volume.

There is a copy of Faidi's *Sawat Ilham*, a commentary on the *Qura'n*. The extraordinary feature of this Ms. is that Faidi used only those Persian letters which have no dots except in the case of the quotations from the *Qura'n* retaining the style of the language. It is written in fine hand and its frontispiece illuminated in blue and gold.

A copy of an Arabic Grammar of Razi copied by 'Aini, who could transcribe a volume in one night, in 822 H./1419 A.C. It bears the seals of the Madrasah 'Ainiyah beside the University of al-Azhar.

A unique copy of the *Kitabu-Saffahun* of Sufi Bishr al-Hafi was transcribed in 483 H/1090-91. It is another oldest copy in the library.

Some of the illustrated manuscripts of the Library are unsurpassable because of their exquisite calligraphy, the priceless miniatures, the dignified colours of lapis-lazuli and vermillion of green, purple, saffron, indigo, scarlet and cinnabor.

References:

1. O'Connor, V. C. Scott, *An Eastern Library,* Glasgow University Press, 1920, p.8.
2. Ibid.
3. He was married to Mahmudah Khatun, the eldest daughter of Muhammad Kabir and sister of Muhammad Sami, the father-in-law of the present writer.
4. *Bankipur Catalogue,* Vol. I, p.248.

Courtesy: Some leading Muslim libraries of the world by S. M. Imamuddin

Khuda Bakhsh
(1842 – 1908)

— *By Md. Muzaffar Imam*

Khuda Bakhsh was a great scholar, philanthrophist and bibiophile of international fame. He was born at Saran on August 2nd, 1842. In 1861 he passed his Entrance Examination from the Calcutta University. He studied law in Patna and passed pleadership in 1868 and started his practice at Patna. Later he was appointed a Government pleader in 1881. In 1883, Khuda Bakhsh was appointed the first vice-chairman of Patna Municipality and the Patna District Board. He also served as the chief justice of the Hyderabad High Court from 1895 to 1898. Khuda Bakhsh was a contemporary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Nawab Ameer Ali with whom he kept his close relation and contact. He was a symbol of Muslim culture and learning. The greatest achievement of Khuda Bakhsh was the Bankipore Oriental Library, which was inaugurated in 1891. It has one of the finest collections of Muslim literature in the world. Several enlightened persons like Lord Curzon, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru. Radha Krishnan and Zakir Hussain paid their kind visit to the library which continued to burn the flame of knowledge and wisdom. He himself was great lover of learning and knowledge and always worked for the cause of education in Bihar. He heralded a new ray of hope and prosperity for the people of Bihar. The British Government, conferred on him the title of Khan Bahadur and CIE for his valuable services for education and cultural development in Bihar. He died on August 3, 1908

and buried in the premises of the Library in Patna. Thus the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library proved to be a symbol of early political consciousness of the people of Bihar.

Courtesy Role of Muslims in the National Movement

Khuda Bakhsh Library : A Researcher's Paradise

By *B.K.Mishra*

The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, a treasure house of oriental learning, has been playing a significant role in the field of education and research. It has a vast collection of rare manuscripts and other research materials which are not to be found anywhere else.

Founded in 1891 by Khuda Bakhsh Khan, an eminent lawyer of Patna, the library has of late emerged as an outstanding institution of higher learning and research by adopting a multi-dimensional approach to disseminate knowledge on a wider scale. The library's spot services as also its reference services by correspondence are highly acclaimed.

Lectures and seminars organised by the library at regular intervals are directed toward strengthening communal harmony and linguistic and regional understanding. The library's scheme of inter-lingual translation of the best works of creative literature in all the national languages of India will leave a lasting impression on the minds of the readers. This is besides the 30 volumes project of the library on freedom movement based on the rare materials preserved in the library.

The Urdu writings of Moti Lal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Lala Rajpat Rai, found only in the Khuda Bakhsh archives and presented to the public for the first time in the Freedom Movement series of the library, open new vistas for research in modern Indian history.

The library is also busy in yet another field of research – integration of Urdu and Hindi, keeping their identities fully intact and yet reminding lovers and litterateurs of either language that once they were one and the same and, in spirit, they are still one and the same. Following this theme, the library has brought out Hindi-Urdu dictionaries – one compiled during the time of Shah Alam and the other compiled at the instance of Aurangzeb which is considered to be the oldest.

All these activities of the library are in addition to its regular, spot services to the readers and scholars along with the bibliographical services and cataloguing of manuscripts and other items. The library also carries out research work and publication of the critical editions of rare works available here. A scholarly quarterly journal is also published by the library which is of great use to scholars all over the world.

There are many stories connected with the history of the library. The family of Khuda Bakhsh Khan was reputed for its scholarship which lasted for three generations. His father, Mohammad Bakhsh, was man of letters. He spent the major portion of his income in purchasing manuscripts, which at the time of his death in 1876, were 1400 in number. On the death bed he entrusted these manuscripts to Khuda Bakhsh and asked him to start with them a public library for the benefit of all. Khuda Bakhsh carried out this mission and ultimately succeeded in establishing Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library.

Search for Books

Khuda Bakhsh engaged Md.Maqi, an Arab book-hunter, on a monthly pay of Rs.50/-and asked him to search for rare manuscripts in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Persia. It was Khuda Bakhsh's practice to pay double railway fare to every manuscript seller who visited Patna. Thus his fame spread throughout the country and he was given the first choice of buying every manuscript on sale in any part of the country. As years passed, the number of manuscripts went on increasing. He felt the necessity of a building for his library. In 1888, it was completed and the books were shifted to the new building. As it was not possible for an individual to maintain and develop such an institution, in 1888, he asked Mr.Campbell, an opium agent at Patna, to bring the library to the notice of the government.

The same year Sir Charles Lyall, a noted scholar of Arabic, visited the library and was much impressed by the valuable collection he found here. He drew the attention of the Bengal government and pursuaded it to be its patron. In 1891, the opening ceremony of the library was performed by the then Lt.Governor, Sir Charles Elliott. At that time, the library had 6,500 books including 4,000 manuscripts. The government of Bengal became the trustee of the library and appointed a committee for its management.

Mr.Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh, son of Khuda Bakhsh Khan, inherited all the noble qualities of his father and took keen interest in developing the library. A scholar of English, French and German language besides Urdu and Persian, he wrote and translated several books. He had a considerable collection of books in different European languages most of which was donated to the library by his wife after his death.

Desna Collection

An important event in the history of the library was the addition of the entire collection of the Al-Islah library of Desna. In 1961, about 7,000 books were given to this library which have been kept in a separate apartment known as 'Desna collection'. It contains some rare manuscripts besides important magazines and journals of the early 19th century.

The library was declared an institution of national importance in 1969 by an Act of Parliament and since then it has been managed by the government of India. The library does not face any problem of funds so far as its development activities are concerned.

At present the library has got more than one lakh printed books in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English languages on such subjects as Indian history, Islamic learning, Hindu religion, and the Middle East. The library has abundant source materials for scholars of medieval Indian history. Among the rare books available in the library are a copy of the *Memoirs of Napolean Bonaparte* containing a sheet with Napolean's signature and a copy of the *Collection of Lord Byron's poem* having some corrections in the author's own handwriting.

The manuscripts section of the library has about 20,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages. Besides, it also has some rare manuscripts in Turkish, Hindi, Sanskrit and Pashtu languages and about 200 palm leaves.

Rare Collection

Giving details of the various rare manuscripts preserved in the library, Dr.Md.Atiqur Rahman, assistant librarian-in-charge of the Mss. section, said that the Holy Quran, written in Naskh in 1269 by Yaqut-al-Mustasami, a calligrapher of the highest repute, was one of the rarest collections of the library. Other manuscripts deserving special mention are *Maquamat-al-Hariri* by Abu Mohammad al-Qasim bin Hariri written in 1232. *Al-Amali* by Abul Qasim Abdal Malik, Tarikh Dimashq by Siqataddin Abul Qasim Ali, written in 1217-22; *Al-Luma Fi-at-Tasawwuf* by Abu Nasr (oldest copy of the work known as yet), *Al Isharat-wa-at-Tanbihat* by Abu Ali al-Hussain (a very old copy of the last and most profound philosophical work of the author dealing with logic, physics and metaphysics), *Kitab-al-Tasrif* by Khalaf bin Abbas az-Zahravi, written in 1190 (a very old illustrated copy of the work on surgery highly acclaimed even by European scholars); *Diwan-i-Hafiz* by Khwaja Shamsuddin Mohammad Hafiz Shirazi (a unique copy of the Diwan bearing marginal notes in the handwriting of Emperors Humayun and Jahangir).

Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuria, a history of the time of Timur, down to the 22nd year of Akbar's reign, contains 132 masterpiece illustrations by the outstanding painters of the court of Akbar. *Shahanshah Namah* by Hussaini, written in Nastaliq, contains the seals of Jahan Ara Begum and other distinguished nobles of the Timuride sovereigns of India. Badshah Namah by Mohammad Amin Bin Abul Hasan Qazwini,a complete history of Shah Jahan's life, is profusely illustrated and decorated on the margins with beautiful floral designs. The *Shah Namah* by Abul Qasim Mansur Firdausi contains 23 fine Persian miniature. *Diwan Mirza Kamran* of Mirza Kamran, younger brother of Emperor Humayun, contains the autographs of the Emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan and the seals and signatures of many distinguished nobles and officers of the court of Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and others.

Available Facilities

The library has got several fumigation chambers, good lamination facilities, well-equipped bindery and preservation unit for proper upkeep of the rare manuscripts. It has got a separate microfilm and photographic section to get all the rare materials available in this library and also in other libraries of the country microfilmed. The library has also got a xerox machine for the benefit of readers. The library regularly subscribes to more than450 periodicals and newspapers which are available in the periodical section. The reference section replies to the academic queries made by scholars from all over the world. The library has got about 300 regular members and is visited by a large number of scholars and researchers every day.

Among the distinguished visitors to this library were Lord Curzon (1903), Rabindra Nath Tagore (1913), Mahatma Gandhi (1925), Lord Wovell (1944), C.V.Raman (1944), Jawaharlal Nehru (1953), and Ali Asghar Hekmet, ambassador of Iran in India (1954). Dr.Zakir Husain was a regular visitor of this library and Prof.Syed Hasan Askari has made the best use of its precious collections.

To speed up the pace of research, it offers research fellowships and national fellowships respectively to the students working for Ph.D. and D.Litt. degrees and to university and college teachers. The library has been recognised by several universities (Kashmir, Jamia Millia, Gulbarga and Magadh) as a centre of research work for Ph.D. and D.Litt.degrees.

Dr.A.R.Bedar, director of the library, has taken keen interest in the multidimensional growth of this prestigious library.

Courtesy Times of India, Patna May 18, 1989.

Khuda Bakhsh Library – veritable treasure trove

The Landmarks of the Capital

By *Lala Surajnandan*

Patna can boast of atleast half-a-dozen buildings of national and architectural importance. Each one of them are unique in design and structure and a tourist is bound to be arrested by its beauty and antiquity.

The city itself known as Patliputra in the ancient times is steeped in antiquity; the famous Chinese travellers and historians (Hiuen-Tsang and Fahian) who recorded their impression of visit to India included Patliputra in their narratives.

Let us look at (one of) these treasures (namely) Khuda Bakhsh Library.

This world famous library was built in 1891. Gradually manuscripts were collected from different countries and now the collection is so rich that the original library was not able to accommodate the books and other documents which were kept heaped up for some time.

It is of great interest to note that another new library building of oriental design has sprung up in the same campus. The whole Khuda Bakhsh Library campus looks elegant situated, as it is, on the Ashoka Rajpath guarded with its magnificent iron gates.

The collections in the library include not only books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic but also hand written manuscripts on parchment and palm leaves. Great care is needed to preserve these ancient treasures of knowledge and I am sure both the Government and the University Grants Commission will continue to help this institution.

Courtesy: Hindustan Times, Patna September 29, 1991.

A Date with History

By *Basant K.Mishra*
&
Pranava K.Chaudhary

Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, in Patna, a century old institution and a grand repository of Islamic culture and literature celebrated its centenary in October this year. The event was inaugurated by the Governor, Shafi Qureshi.

Founded in 1891 by Khuda Bakhsh Khan, an eminent lawyer of Patna, the library's spot services, and reference service by correspondence are highly acclaimed. As part of the centenary celebration, the library will publish rare documents and books written by Khuda Bakhsh and his contemporaries, books on Hindu-Muslim unity, Indian religion, alongwith a collection of a hundred years' intellectual thinking in Urdu literature. An international meet on Indian religions will also be held sometimes in the month of March next year. An award of Rs.one lakh, for an outstanding contribution to national integration, will also be announced by the library in March. The spate of hectic centenary celebrations will culminate with an address and prize distribution ceremony by the Prime Minister the same time next year.

A massive translation project is also being planned, rendering the epics and the Upanishads into Urdu as well as fiction by well-known Hindi and Bengali writers. Paper and parchment are indeed coming alive.

The library, which is housed on a sprawling complex located on the well-known Ashok Raj Path, was declared an institution of national importance in 1969 by an Act of Parliament and since then is being managed by the

Government of India. The library does not want for funds as the governor of Bihar happens to be its ex-officio chairman.

There are many stories about the library's origins. The family of Khuda Bakhsh Khan was reputed for its scholarly inclinations. His father, Mohammad Bakhsh, was a man of letters who spent a major portion of his income buying manuscripts. At the time of his death in 1876, he entrusted 1,400 such manuscripts to Khuda Bakhsh to start a public library.

Khuda Bakhsh got Md.Maqi, an Arab book-hunter, on a monthly pay of Rs.50/- to search for rare manuscripts in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Persia. His practice of offering an incentive to every manuscript seller paid off and by 1888, his collections needed building.

The same year Sir Charles Lyall, a noted Arabic scholar visited the library and was greatly impressed. He urged the Bengal government to patronise the institution. And in1891, after a formal opening ceremony by the then Lt. Governor, Sir Charles Elliot, the government of Bengal became the trustee of the library and appointed a committee for its management. At that time the library had a collection of 6,500 books including 4,000 manuscripts.

Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh, Khuda Bakhsh Khan's son, inherited his father's literary interests. He was a scholar of English, French and German besides Urdu and Persian, and an author and translator too.

After his death, in 1961, about 7,000 rare books from the Al-Islah library of Desna were donated to the Khuda Bakhsh Library to be preserved in a separate section known as the 'Desna Collection'.

The library's present collection of books in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English, numbers over a lakh and covers Indian history and religion. Among the rare books available in the library are a copy of the *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte* bearing the man's signature, and a copy of the *Collection of Lord Byron's Poems* with some corrections in the author's own handwriting.

Other priceless pieces of the library include Jehangir's book on fortune telling with the marginal note in the emperor's own hand stating when and with what result he consulted his oracle; *Kitab-ul-Hashais* written in the 11th century, *Yusuf wa Zulaikha* for which Jehangir paid 100 gold mohars; Ranjit Singh's military account book with entries in Persian and Gurumukhi; works of Khusro containing the seal of Akbar's mother, Hamida Banu Begum, and *History of the Timur Dynasty Down to the 22nd Year of Akbar's Reign.*

The manuscripts section of the library has about 20,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, apart from rare ones in Turkish, Hindi, Sanskrit and Pashtu and about 200 on palm leaf. The Holy Quran written in Naskh in1269 by Yaqut-al-Mustasami, a reputed calligrapher, is a treasure.

Tarikh Khandan-i-Timuria, a history of the time of Timur, contains 132 masterly illustrations by the outstanding painters of the court of Akbar. *Shahanshah Namah* by Hussaini, written in Nastaliq, contains the seals of Jahan Ara Begum and other distinguished nobles of the Timuride sovereigns of India. *Badshah Namah* by Mohammad Amin bin Abul Hasan Qazwini, complete history of Shah Jahan's life, is profusely illustrated and decorated on the margins with beautiful floral designs. *The Shah Namah* by Abul Qasim Mansur Firdausi contains 23 fine Persian miniatures.

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More recently, the library has developed into an important cultural centre. Lectures and seminars are organised regularly to promote communal harmony, the best works in regional literature have been translated into the major national languages and Hindi-to-Urdu dictionaries have been compiled. A 30 volume project on the freedom movement has also been preserved in the library. The library has fumigation chambers, good lighting, a well-equipped bindery, a preservation unit, and xerox facilities. It has a separate microfilm and photographic section and a well-equipped periodicals section.

Among its most distinguished visitors have been Lord Curzon (1903), Lord Wavell (1944), C.V.Raman (1944), Jawaharla Nehru (1953) and Ali Asghar Hekmet, Ambassador of Iran in India (1954). Dr.Zakir Hussain was a regular visitor to this library but the best use of its precious collections has perhaps been made by the renowned historian, the late Prof. Syed Hasan Asakri.

The library has also created research fellowships for the study of comparative religion, at par with the UGC, and national fellowships at par with Indian Council for Historical Research.

A one-year associateship course in oriental librarianship has also been introduced, focussing on the cultural history of South Asia and Middle East, while short-term courses in Malayalam, Bengali, Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Urdu, have always existed.

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Courtesy Times of India, Patna December 22. 1991

A treasure-trove : The Khuda Bakhsh Library

By *Kalyan Chaudhuri*

"A treasure-house of Muslim art and literature." Thus do scholars all over India describe the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna. And not without reason.

Established in 1891, the library – the product of a bibliophile's labour of love – boasts of one of the world's richest collections of rare books, manuscripts and original paintings, each an outstanding example of the best of Muslim art and literature. It enshrines the memory of scholars and kings long gone, of causes lost and won, and of a vibrant culture which in its time had a profound influence and inspired some of the greatest master-pieces from Cordoba to Delhi.

Today, it is "an institution of national importance," having been declared so by the Government of India which took over control of the library by an Act of Parliament in 1969. It houses over 18,000 Urdu, Persian and Arabic manuscripts --the world's second largest collection, after the one at the Istanbul Public Library, according to Dr.Abid Raza Bedar, Director of the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library. It also has over 95,000 old and rare printed books and over 2,000 original paintings of the Mughal, Rajput, Iranian and Turkish schools. There are manuscripts in exquisite calligraphy with enamelled gold; priceless miniatures with the colours of lapis lazuli and vermilion, indigo and scarlet, green, purple, cinnabar and saffron.

This vast and valuable collection was acquired over generations – sometimes employing methods that were not entirely honourable.

Khuda Bakhsh Khan was born into a highly-educated collection but he declined, explaining to one of his friends, "I am a poor man and the sum offered to me was a princely fortune, but could I ever part for money with that to which my father and I have dedicated our lives? No, the collection is for Patna, and the gift shall be laid at the feet of the Patna public."

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This vast and valuable collection was acquired over generations – sometimes employing methods that were not entirely honourable.

Khuda Bakhsh Khan was born into a highly-educated family of north Bihar, one of whose members, it is said, assisted in compiling the *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri*, the Institutes of Aurangzeb. Khuda Bakhsh's father, Mohammad Bakhsh, an advocate and a scholar, had built up a valuable collection of about 1400 books, some of which he had inherited; these he bequeathed to his son with a death-bed wish that they be made the nucleus of a great collection which would foster oriental learning. The son, with no patrimony other than these volumes, established the library in 1891 in Patna and by a deed of trust "donated" the entire collection to the public. Then called the Patna Oriental Public Library, it was renamed after Khuda Bakhsh's death in 1908. (He died at the age of 66 and was buried within the library precincts.)

The founder's will specifies that under no circumstance can the library be shifted from where it is now: Ashok Rajpath, popularly known as Bankipore, in Patna. A man from Chapra, Khuda Bakhsh had reasons for coming to Patna to establish his library. To him, Patna had great historical significance. It was the city of Ashoka, who tried to rule with love; of his grandfather Chandragupta, the adventurer; and of Greek ambassador Megasthenes, who spent eight years there and gave the Europe of his time a vivid account of life in an Indian city 300 years before the birth of Christ. "The library," wrote Khuda Bakhsh "must grow in such an environment." And grow it did.

An advocate and, later, a judge, Khuda Bakhsh Library travelled extensively all over India, his fame as a book collector spreading all the while. It was his invariable practice to pay two-way railway fare to every prospective manuscript-seller who visited Bankipore, whether or not a purchase was effected.

The Mughal Library in Delhi once possessed the most precious manuscripts in India. Some has been purchased, others executed by artists and scholars in the Imperial service and still others secured through military conquests. Many more were confiscated from Muslim nobles upon their death. During the 16th and 17th centuries, these started dispersing and reached the East. A sizable collection found its way to the library of the Nawabs of Oudh. During the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, the Imperial and the Nawabi treasures were widely dispersed. The Nawab of Rampur, who backed the British, proclaimed that he would pay the victorious soldiers a rupee for every manuscript brought to him. Needless to add, he got the best of the "loot."

Khuda Bakhsh began his collection much later, but soon there was a rivalry between him and the Nawab. According to historian Jadhunath Sarcar, Khuda Bakhsh finally enticed from the Nawab's employment a famed book-hunter, an Aramaic named Muhammad Makki, paid him a monthly salary of Rs.50 besides commissions and employed him to search for rare manuscripts in the Arab world.

The "emissary" went about "ransacking the libraries of Cairo, Damascus, Beirut (and other cities) and bringing back every now and then... manuscripts on various subjects as they fell into his grasp." Khuda Bakhsh's son, Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh, in his book, "*My Father : His Life and Reminiscences*", admits with pride that many of the manuscripts in the library has been stolen from elsewhere. Khuda Bakhsh himself was not ashamed of it. The book quotes him as having told a friend, Sir Ali Imam, "The art of collection is one that soars above and defies the provisions of the penal code. There are three classes of blind men – those who are bereft of sight; those who lend valuable books even to a friend; and those who return such volumes, once they have passed into their possession."

Khuda Bakhsh's passion for books was intense. The British Museum made him a magnificent offer for his collection, but he turned it down saying, "I am a poor man. The money that has been offered is a princely fortune. But how can I ever part for money with that to which my father and I have dedicated our lives.?"

Khuda Bakhsh believed his library was visited by the Prophet of God. The story has been recorded by Jadunath Sircar in his book on Khuda Bakhsh. "One night," said Khuda Bakhsh, "I dreamt that the lane near the library was filled with a dense crowd of people. When I came out of my house, they cried out the Prophet is on a visit to your library, and you are not there to show him round. I hastened to the manuscript room and found him gone. But there were two manuscripts of the Hadis, lying open upon the table. These, the people said, had been read by the Prophet." These two volumes (of the Hadis) contain a not issued by Khuda Bakhsh stating that they are never to be allowed to go out of the library.

* * * * *

Descriptive cataloguing of the library's manuscripts was initiated by the scholar-administrator Lord Curzon in 1905 under the supervision of Sir Denison Ross, a British Indologist. So far, 34 volumes have been brought out. Most of the old volumes, long out of print, have been taken by for reproduction with the necessary corrections.

Acquisition of manuscripts continues regularly – some of them are gifted to it, others procured in exchange and still others purchased. Bedar* told *Frontline* that last year library bought 18 valuable manuscripts;208 others were gifted to it. Besides, 4,639 books and periodicals were purchased. In 1991, the library got 888 old and rare printed books as gifts from donors in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Italy, Iran, the United States (Chicago), and Saudi Arabia (Mecca).

Jawaharlal Nehru, while visiting the library in1953, expressed his desire to see the rare materials reproduced and reprinted so that those who could not come to Patna would still have access to them. Thereafter, 36 volumes of rare and old prints were edited and published. Bedar said plenty of material on the freedom struggle was lying buried in old periodicals which, if brought to light, may enrich the history of the movement. The library, he said, had been collecting all such material to be published in about 30 volumes. A little-known speech by Motilal Nehru, running to 60 pages had been published.

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* Dr.A.R.Bedar, the then Director of Library who retired in April 1996.

The library plans to translate outstanding manuscripts and books from Hindi and other national languages into Urdu and from Urdu into other languages. It has published "*Shamsul Bayan fi Mustalahat al-Hindustan*", the first Urdu-Hindi dictionary of Shah Alam's period, produced at the instance of Aurangzeb, and "*Bag-i-Ma'ani*" and "*Majma'un Nafa'is*", the first biographical dictionaries of 18th century Persian poets. The "*Tuzuk-e-Jehangiri*" is also under print.

The Persian manuscripts in the library are a veritable literary treasure. They include "*Jahangir Namah*", the earliest version of Jahangir's memoirs, "*Shah Jehan Namah*" and "*Shahanshah Namah*", an epic poem celebrating the victories of Muhammad II, Sultan of the Ottoman empire, who conquered Constantinople in 1453. There are accounts of many bold battles in the volume which reached India during Shah Jehan's reign. The library also has in its collection Jami's poem, "*Yusuf wa Zulaikha*", copied by the greatest Persian calligraphist, Mir Ali, for whose labour Jehangir paid 1,000 gold mohars, two illustrated manuscripts on Shah Jehan's life, one of them bearing his signature, "*Safinatul-Awlia*", the odes of Hafiz; Amir Khusrau's "*Masnavi*", copied for Sultan Abdul Aziz of Bukhara by Nur Ali (who was kept in confinement for three years to finish it); "*Shah Namah*", the richly-illuminated work of Firdausi; and the works of Khusro bearing the seal of Akbar's mother, Hamida Banu Begum.

Among the Arabic works, the library has "*Madinatal-Ulum*"a rare manuscript of an encyclopaedia containing brief descriptions of 341 branches of learning;"*Kitab ul-Hasha'ish*", a translation of the pharmacopocia compiled by the Greek physician Dioscorides Pedanius in A.D.77 (the translation being undertaken by Stephen, the son of Byzantine emperor Basil, in the reign of the Khalif Mamun); an illustrated copy of "*Al-Umdah fi Sana'ah al-Jirahah*", a treatise on surgery and surgical instruments; and "*Al-Quran*", which was transcribed by Abdalbaqi al-Haddad, the celebrated calligrapher of Harat, who came to India in the last year of Shah Jehan's reign.

Perhaps the rarest and most valuable manuscript in the library is the "*Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuriyah*" in Persian script, which narrates the history of Timur and his successors down to Babar, Humayun and Akbar. A product of 20 historians and 70 painters, it is remarkable for the splendour of its miniature paintings in the delicate style that was practised under Akbar's patronage. The flyleaf has an autographed note by Shah Jehan in which he states that the work was written at the instance of Shah Baba (as Shah Jehan referred to Akbar) in the 22nd year of his reign. The manuscript, insured for Rs.70 crore, is embellished with 132 illuminated folio pages bearing the works of the most notable painters of that time. Their names are inscribed at the bottom of the page, a practice uncommon in the East. Each of the paintings is enamelled in gold and is exquisite in colour. Seventy-nine of them depict scenes from the life of Timur from the days when he, as a child, played with his companions, to the hour of his death. Sieges and battles are the principal themes, and in their sweep they cover a great part of Asia and beyond – from Damascus to Delhi, from the snow-covered Badakhshan (in Russia) to the silted Nile valley. It is a colourful chronicle of matters military in all their adventure and gore – of the crossing of rivers and mountains and the storming of forts, of valour in battle and cruelty in victory...

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Frontline, August 28, 1992.

A Repository of Rare Oriental Manuscripts

By Fozail Aqdas Ghazali

The renowned centre of rare books in the Indian province of Bihar, Khuda Bakhsh Library, emerged out of a collection of Maulvi Muhammad Bakhsh. Such was the passion of this man of letters and law for books that he collected 1,400 rare manuscripts and books.

When he was on his death-bed in 1876, he entrusted the entire collection to his son and wished him to open a library for the public whenever he should find himself in a position to do so.

Khuda Bakhsh inherited from his father the love for books and dedication to public service. He made it a mission in life to found a public library so as to fulfil his father's dream.

Born in Chapra, Bihar, on August 2, 1842, Khuda Bakhsh was brought up under the guidance of his father to dedicate his life to serve humanity.

He started his career as a *peshkar* (clerk at court). In 1880 he was appointed the Government Pleader of Patna and in 1881 the title of *Khan Bahadur* was conferred upon him for social service.

He was elevated to the post of Chief Justice of the Hyderabad High Court in 1895. In spite of having all these titles and honors, he was a very simple man of determination and vision. The library was his life-long achievement. He spent whatever he earned on its growth. He died on August 3, 1908, and buried in the premises of the library.

Khuda Bakhsh travelled widely in the country to acquire rare books and manuscripts. With these acquisitions, he laid the foundation for a two-storeyed building for the library. It was ready in 1888 at the cost of Rs.80,000. All the books were shifted to this new building in 1890.

The library was opened for public on October 29, 1891 with 4,000 rare manuscripts in Arabic and Persian. It was named as Oriental Public Library.

The people, however, prefixed the founder's name in view of his service to the public. Since then, it is officially known as Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library.

It is mentioned in the history of the library that once J.B.Elliot, Provincial Judge of Patna (a great manuscript collector himself), borrowed a unique manuscript of the *Odes of Kamaluddin Ismail Isfahani* from Muhammad Bakhsh and afterward refused to return it, offering a large price for it.

The owner indignantly declined the proposal, but held his peace. When Elliot retired, he packed his choicest manuscripts in some cases and shipped them to England, while his worthless books were put in another case and left at Patna to be sold by auction.

But by the irony of fate, not only the extorted volume of *Odes* but some other rare manuscripts (such as *Majalisi Khamsa* bearing Shah Jahan's autograph), had got into the wrong case and Muhammad Bakhsh bought them. On reaching England, Elliot discovered his mistake, but could only fret and fume in vain.

"One day when Khuda Bakhsh was driving back from the High Court at Hyderabad, his eyes discovered a bundle of volumes on a sack of flour in a grocer's shop. He stopped, turned the books over, and asked about the price. The owner shrewdly answered: "To any other man I should have sold this heap of old and rotten papers for Rs.3. But as your lordship is interested in them, they must contain something of value. I want Rs.20 for them."

A true guess, for along with some worthless things the bundle contained an old work on Arabic bibliography not to be found elsewhere. Immediately after Khuda Bakhsh's purchase, Rs.400 were offered for it by the Nazim (of Hyderabad), but in vain." (*The Modern Review*, Calcutta, 1908).

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, visited the library in 1903 which resulted in the construction of a public reading hall in 1905 named after him. The first volume of the catalogue of manuscripts came out in 1908 which followed 30 volumes more in the subsequent years.

From the very inception of the library, a number of celebrities from India and abroad visited this magnificent collection and placed on record their deep sense of appreciation.

Some of them are Lord Lytton, Lord Minto, Shibli Nomani, Lord Irvin, J.C.Bose, M.K.Gandhi, Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani, Raja Mahmudabad, C.V.Raman and Lord Mountbatten.

Pandit Nehru, first prime minister of independent India, on his visit to the library in 1953 opined: "...It was a rare delight to see these beautiful works of art, which enshrines a period of India's history. They deserve the most careful and loving attention. I should like to see them reproduced by the latest technique, so that others can see them and share in this joy." This quote in contained is the booklet *Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library : An Overview.*

According to Dr.Salimuddin Ahmad, assistant director of the library, the central government agreed to bear the cost of maintenance, reorganization and development of the library on modern scientific lines, provided that the state government would contribute Rs.50,000 annually toward the same, according to the State Government Resolution No.V/L4055/6-E-120, dated September 26, 1962.

On December 26, 1969 the library was raised to the status of an Institution of National Importance by an Act of Parliament. Since then it has been working under the control of the Government of India.

Collection Development

The library specializes in Islamic studies, *Tibb* (Unani medicine), biographies, comparative religion, medieval history, South East Asian History, West Asian History, Medieval Sciences and literature on India's Freedom Movement.

It contains 21, 101 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Hindi and Sanskrit and palm leaves. Some of the rarities deserve a mention here:

1. *The Qur'an :* A very old pocket Quran. Written in small and close Kufi, with vowels marked by red dots. The titles of the chapters are in thick Kufi, sketched in black and filled with gold. The *Ruku* (section) is marked by a marginal ornament. Not dated; probably 9th century.

2. *Diwan-i-Hafiz* of Khwaja Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz Al-Shirazi, written in the 9th century A.H. It bears marginal notes in the handwriting of Emperors Humayun and Jahangir.

3. *Tarikh Khandan-i-Timuria :* It contains the history of the time of Timur, down to the 22nd year of Akbar's reign. It contains 132 masterpiece illustrations from the outstanding painters in the court of Akbar. No other copy exists anywhere.

4. *Shahanshah Namah* of Husaini, composed between 1003-1012 A.H. A number of seals and signatures of some of the distinguished nobles of the Timuride Sovereigns of India are found on it. The most important among them is the seal of Jahan Ara Begum, daughter of Shah Jahan, which is not found in any other manuscript of the library. It is a special account of Sultan Muhammad III of Turkey, written for him in Constatinople.

5. *Maha Bharata :* A Persian translation of Maha Bharata made by the order of Akbar under the supervision of Abul Fazl in 1587 A.D.

6. *Sri Bhagwat :* A Persian translation of the whole *Bhagwat Purana*.

7. *Sri Ramayan :* A copy of *Ramayana* beautifully illustrated, dated 1778 A.D.

A large number of original letters written by eminent persons are also available here e.g. Allama Iqbal, Dr.Rajendra Prasad, first President of India, Abul Kalam Azad, Akbar Allahabadi and Muhammad Ali Jauhar. All the letters are in Urdu language.

Moreover, about 200,000 of books, including 37,000 bound Urdu periodicals and newspapers are on record, which have great research value.

A few of the rarest books are also in the collection, namely:

(1) *La Historia D Italia* by Di M. Francesco Guicciardini (in three volumes), Venetia, 1565.

(2) *Turkish History to the Growth of Ottoman Empire* (in four volumes), London, 1687.

(3) *Ode to Napolean* by Lord Byron, London, 1814. Two stanzas in the Ode have been added in the author's own hand-writing.

(4) *Memoirs of Napolean Bonaparte,* London, 1836. It bears the autograph of Napolean and the seal of his secretary. This copy of the book belonged to the Royal Library of Napolean.

A small collection of 800 coins has enhanced the value of this treasure. Some of them are of the period of Akbar, the Great, Islam Shah, son of Sher Shah, Emperor Tughlaq, Shahjahan and Shah Alam, etc.

It has also an audio-visual collection, consisting of microfilms (2,195), microfiche (752), slides (182), video cassettes (650) and audio cassettes (979).

Readers' Services

The reprographic services have been improved with the installation of Minolta Microfilm Reader Printer. In addition to microfilms, photocopies, slides and photographs, the library also provides microfilm print-outs to the needy researchers. Reference service is extended through fax, phone and now through e-mail also.

Khuda Bakhsh Award

To pay homage to this great soul devoted to human cause and commemorate his remarkable contribution to the public an annual award was instituted in his name in 1992. It carries Rs.1,00,000 and a citation. It is conferred by the President of India upon the scholars on their life-time achievements in the fields specified by the library.

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Courtesy: Diwaniya, (Saudi Gazette, The Weekly Cultural Forum),
Jeddah, June 26, 2000

Treasure Trove

– *By Santosh Jha*

In the DIE-HARD corporate and commercial environs, it presents a sauve and soft face of literary history. Pedestrians and tourists cannot, but be mesmerised by the antiquity and opulence of this landmark in Patna. The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library located in a prime locality of the city stands out as a memorial of a glorious past in the otherwise vanishing literary and cultural milieu. The original name of the library, as inscribed on the Trust Deed is 'The Patna Oriental Public Library.' This renowned centre of rare books emerged out of a collection of Maulvi Muhammad Bakhsh, who was a man of letters and law with a great passion for books. He collected 1,400 rare manuscripts and books and when he was on his death-bed, he entrusted the entire collection to his son Khuda Bakhsh, advising him to open a library for the public.

Born in Chapra, Bihar on August 2, 1842 Khuda Bakhsh started his career as a *peshkar* (clerk at a court). In 1880, he was appointed the government pleader of Patna and in 1881, the title of Khan Bahadur was conferred upon him for social service. He was elevated to the post of chief justice of Hyderabad high court in 1895. But despite the honours and titles, Khuda Bakhsh preferred an austere life and often travelled across the country to acquire rare books and manuscripts. He was determined not to be cowed down by the supremacy of the British culture and was hell-bent on preserving the Oriental literature for future generations in India.

With the acquisition of books, he laid the foundation for a two-storey building for the library which was all set in 1888 and it was opened for public on October 29, 1891 with 4,000 rare manuscripts in Arabic and Persian. Khuda Bakhsh strongly believed that the library had the blessings of god and as quoted in his own words: "One night, I dreamt that the lane near the library was crowded with people and I heard them telling me that the Prophet Muhammad is on a visit to your library and you are not there to show him round! I rushed to the library and found that he had gone. But there were two manuscripts of the *Hadith* lying on the table. These, the people said, were read by the Prophet." It is recorded that the British Museum once offered him a princely sum for his collection, but he declined the offer saying that the collection was for the people of India, and according to the will spelt out by Bakhsh, "under no circumstances shall the library be removed from its present location."

The Library houses 16,000 rare manuscripts and about 2.2 lakh printed books and periodicals. The assets are so large that since 1904, work on the catalogue of the library is in progress and is yet to be completed! "It is a strenuous task and every year, new arrivals make the task difficult," says a library information assistant. For those who wish to venture deep into the history of the Islamic world and the Oriental culture, the library is a virtual paradise. Visitors can flip through the Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Hindi and Sanskrit manuscripts on palm leaves or settle down quietly with the 9th century dated pocket *Quran* written in *Kufi* script in black and gold. *Diwan-e-Hafiz* of *Khwaja Shamsuddin Muhammad 'Hafiz al-Shirazi* written in the 9th century bears marginal notes in the handwriting of Emperors Humayun and Jahangir. *Tarikh-e-Khandan-e-Timuria*, the history of the time of Timur, down to the reign of Akbar is another prized collection. The *Shahinshahnamah* of Husaini dates back to 16th century and is dedicated to Sultan Mohammad. *Shahnamah* of Firdausi, the great Persian poet is another classical literature in poetry form. The manuscript is incomplete to the extent of 10,000 verses, not older than 1539 AD. The older and more beautiful version of the *Shahnamah*, adorned with intricate Chinese designs is also available here. Works of Jami, the Sufi mystic and the last great classic poet of Persia can be spotted on the shelves. But it is *Hamlah-e-Haydari*, a poetical account of the Prophet which is most sought after by visitors to the library. *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, London 1836, bears the autograph of Napoleon and the seal of his secretary. Visitors can take a peek into original letters in Urdu written by the great Urdu poet Iqbal, first President of India, Dr.Rajendra Prasad, Abul Kalam Azad and Akbar Allahabadi. It is not just books. Move over to the chunky stuff – coins! Some of them can be traced back to the period of Akbar, Shahjahan and Shah Alam.

Khuda Bakhsh Library was raised to the status of an Institution of National Importance by the Act of Parliament in 1969. The central government took over the library in 1969 and since then, the state government has shirked its responsibility towards the upkeep and betterment of the library. The Library is an autonomous body now. The governor of Bihar is the ex-officio chairman of the library and the director-cum-secretary is appointed by the central government. The Patna commissioner, accountant general of Bihar and other government officials are its members. The library gets funds from the central government both under plan and non-plan heads. The state government has also earmarked Rs.50,000 every year as funds towards the library, but sadly over the years, utilisation of the finances has been faulty, owing to bureaucratic hurdles in the process of procurement of the fund. While the library has a vast area currently, expansion is inevitable as every year over 4,000 books are added into its repertoire. Part of it is purchased, some are gifted by people from all over the world and the rest come in exchange. The library has published more than 100 books which have been catalogued and are offered to readers at reasonable prices.

With Patna University and many other colleges close to the vicinity of the Khuda Bakhsh Library, students are the most frequent visitors here. Lord Curzon, viceroy of India visited the library in 1903 and the Curzon Reading Room was constructed in his memory in 1905. Built in colonial style, the Reading Room is still abuzz with students who gather there to go through the newspapers and periodicals. To borrow books, one has to acquire the membership.

Most visitors these days use the library for reference from the printed books and the elderly often are engrossed with the classics and manuscripts. In keeping with the times, plans have been chalked out to launch a website of the library, so that the world could get easy access to the rare and exclusive books. But the work on this is progressing at a snail's pace. There are practical problems in the launch of the website, but the delay can mostly be attributed to the lack of initiative from the government.

But the silver lining in the cloud is the fact that to pay homage to the great soul Khuda Bakhsh, and to commemorate his remarkable contribution to the public, an annual award was instituted in his name in 1992. It is conferred by the President of India upon scholars on their life-time achievements in the fields specified by the library.

Courtesy Meantime, August 18, 2000

A Goldmine of Precious Scripts

— *By Arun Singh*

Located on the busy Ashok Rajpath in Patna, the 109-year old Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library is a treasure house of ancient manuscripts and paintings of the Islamic world. In fact, copies of the best gems of Islamic literature can be found in this yellow-coloured building. As soon as one enters the premises of Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, total calm and tranquility engulfs one. Strangely enough, it is located on one of the busiest thoroughfares of the State Capital, the Ashok Rajpath. The library attracts scholars from all parts of the world. The richness of this library can be fathomed from the fact that it contains 16,000 manuscripts and 90,000 rare books. It contains ancient books scripted in hand. It also possesses 3,000 ancient paintings of Mughal, Rajput, Iranian and Turkish schools.

Khuda Bakhsh Khan who was a well-known lawyer set up the library in 1891. He was born in Chapra on August 2, 1842. His father Mohammad Bakhsh, was a man of letters and passionate lover of books and it was under his able guidance and supervision that Khuda Bakhsh Khan was brought up. He started his career as a peshkar and then went on to become the Chief Justice, of the Nizam's High Court for a three-year term from 1895 to 1898. He died on August 3, 1908 and was buried in the premises of the library.

"Khuda Bakhsh's passion for books was indeed intense", wrote British writer Vincent Clarence Scott O' Conner in 1920. Mr. Clarence said that the British Museum had made a magnificent offer for his collection, but he declined it saying that he was a poor man and so he did not want to part with something his father and he had dedicated their lives to. He further said that the collection was for Patna.

There are many stories connected with the growth and history of the library. The most precious manuscripts in India were undoubtedly those of the Mughal library in Delhi. All rare and fine specimens of calligraphy and illumination belonging to the 16th and 17th centuries were also brought here. Some were purchased others created by artists retained in the imperial services. Some were secured through conquest and many by confiscation of the goods of great nobles on their death. Thus, was formed the largest library in the east in that period. And while central Asia, Persia and Arabia were torn by incessant wars, India enjoyed peace under the Mughals. In the 18th century, many of these found their way to the library of the Nawab of Oudh. But the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 brought about the fall of Delhi and Lucknow. The Imperial and Nawabi treasures were dispersed. The Nawab of Rampur, who had joined the English, got the best of the loot as he had proclaimed among the victorious sepoys that he would pay one rupee for every manuscript brought to him.

Khuda Bakhsh started his collection much later, but there was this rivalry between him and the Nawab. At last Khuda Bakhsh won over one of Nawab's men Md.Maqi, an Arab, and paid him Rs.50 per month, besides a commission for 18 years, and employed for searching rare manuscripts in Syria, Arabia, Egypt and Persia. Khuda Bakhsh always paid double fare to every manuscript seller who visited Bankipore. Thus his fame spread throughout India and he was given first choice in any part of the country.

Once the library was broken open by a former book binder and some of the best manuscripts stolen. He sent them for sale to a merchant at Lahore and strangely enough, the latter, unaware of the fact, sent them back to Khuda Bakhsh whom he considered to be the most suitable person for transaction. Thus, the sincerity and true love for books of Khuda Bakhsh brought them back to him once more. Mohammad Maqi enriched the library with rare manuscripts. Besides manuscripts poured in from all parts of the country and Khuda Bakhsh paid fancy prices for them.

As years passed by, the number of manuscripts went on increasing. He felt the necessity of a building for his library. In 1888, the building was completed and the books were transported to it. It is this building that is now known as the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library.

There are several rare manuscripts in the library. Among them there are few deserving special mention. There is one rare piece of the Holy Quran written in Naskh in A.H.668-A.D.1269 by Yaqut al-Musta'simi, a calligrapher of the highest repute, attached to the court of the last Abbaside Caliph, Al-Mustasim Billah. His writing was rare and precious as a gem during his own time. The Quran is richly illuminated with borders of floral design.

Diwan-i Hafiz of Khwaja Shamsuddin Mohammad Hafiz al-Shirazi, written in Nastaliq in the 9th century A.H. is a unique copy of the Diwan. It bears marginal notes in the handwriting of Emperor Humayun and Jehangir who made the notes after omens, which explain the particular reasons for consulting the odes and the results that followed after consultation. It also contains the notes of Sultan Hasan Bayaqra.

Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuriyah, a unique copy preserved in the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna is remarkable for the splendour of its illuminations in highly delicate and finished style that was practised by the master artists under the patronage of the great Mughal Akbar. This excellent and profusely illustrated manuscript deals with the history of Timur and his successors down to Babur, Humayun and Akbar. The flyleaf, at the beginning, contains an autographical note by Shahjahan wherein he states that the work was written at the instance of "Shah Baba", as Shahjahan used to call Akbar, in the 22nd year of his reign.

Shahanshah Nama of Husaini composed between A.H.1003-A.D.1012 written in Nastaliq on which a number of seals and signatures of some of the distinguished nobles of Timuride Sovereigns of India are found. The most important among them is the seal of Jahan Ara Begum, the daughter of Shahjahan, which is very rare and not found in any other manuscript of the library. It is a special account of the Sultan Mohammad III of Turkey, written for him in Constantinople, and preserved in the Royal Library. This unique work was somehow or other, brought to India, and preserved in the Royal Library of Shahjahan.

Padshah Namah of Mohammad Amin Abul Hasan Qazwini is also a prized possession of the library. It was written in Nastaliq during Shahjahan's period. This is a complete history. of Shahjahan's life from birth to his death. All the illustrated pages are profusely illuminated and decorated on the margins with beautiful floral designs. The manuscripts was seen by their Majesties George V and Queen Mary, in Delhi, 1911. Their signatures appear on the manuscript.

As far as the love story-based books are concerned, Khamsa-i-Nizami happens to be the most important. Authored by the famous scholar of the 12th century, Nizami's Masnavi Khamsa-i-Nizami comprises such world famous love stories like Laila-Majnu, Shirin-Farhad and others. It contains poems and beautiful paintings also. Another gem in this library is the

Shahnamah of Firdausi. He struggled for 35 years to create 60,000 couplets of Shahnamah that also recounts the history of Iran. The Governor of Kabul and Kashmir, Ali Mardan gave this copy of Shahnamah as a gift to Shahjahan. On seeing the Shahnamah in 1925, Mahatma Gandhi exclaimed, "This is an experience that would never pass away and one would remember it forever."

If the Patnaites are proud of the library, they have bonafide reasons for it. 'Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte' in Lord Byron's original handwritten lines is lying here. This anthology of poems was published in 1814. Another book bearing the signature and seal of Napoleon is also present here. It was published in 1836.

Having seen the rare collection of the library, one would exclaim a-la-Walt Whitman, 'Camerado, this is no book, who touches this, touches a man' Truly you feel the physical presence of the authors of those ancient books.

The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library currently is in the able hands of Dr.Habibur Rahman Chighani. He is sincerely trying to enrich the library further. The Library is not merely a house of books. It acts as the bureau for providing information on rare books of other libraries and museums. Under this project, microfilming of rare books and manuscripts of Aligarh, Rampur, Maner, Phulwarisharif, Asiatic Society of Calcutta, Cambridge University and India Office Library (both in England) have also been done. Besides the audio and video cassettes on the lives of different poets and authors are also found here.

Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore was right when he observed after visiting the library, "When I go from here let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable."

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times, December 5, 2000

An Oasis in the Desert

— By Alok Mishra
HT, Patna

Khuda Bakhsh Library or Patna Oriental Library, the name it bears in the trust deed drawn up by its founder, has one of the finest collections of Islamic literature, rare manuscripts and printed books, paintings of Mughal, Rajput, Turkish and Iranian schools. It also has rare collection of English, Italian, German and French books. It was because of these collections, V C Scott O'Connor described it as one of the finest centres of Muslim literature. Located on Ashok Raj Path in the State capital, it has seen various fortunes in the course of time.

Serving generation after generation for the last 110 years, the library was founded by a Muslim gentleman, Mohammad Bakhsh of Okhai village in Saran district, belonging to a family given to letters and law. One of the family members, it is said, had assisted in compiling the book of Islamic laws written by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb – the *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*. In free times of his career as an advocate, Mohammad Bakhsh devoted himself to the acquisition of oriental books of which he left no less than fourteen hundreds for his son, Khuda Bakhsh.

The father, on his death-bed, had requested his son not to dispense with these books. The noble son took his father's last wish to his heart and not only preserved his dead father's collection but also added to it in a large measure. Putting in all that he had, he established a public library in Patna in 1891.

On January 14 of the year, the entire personal collection was donated to the nation by a deed of trust. That selfless service by the founder family brought it a good name among the royal circles. The then Viceroy, Lord Curzon, took personal interest in the all-round development of the library. The present reading room of the library is known as Curzon Reading Room. Several prominent leaders of the time, including Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and the first Prime Minister of independent India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, made it a point to visit the library.

Gandhi, during his visits to the library in 1925, remarked, "I revere the memory of the great founder who spared no pains or money to present India with such a rare collection."

"I found them even more remarkable than I had expected – and I had expected much.... They deserve the most careful and loving attention," commented Nehru while he visited the library in the year 1953.

Even Dr. Zakir Husain took personal interest in the library. "It was through his efforts that the library gained immortality in the history of the country," said Salimuddin Ahmad, Assistant Director of the library, adding that he was instrumental in the library getting national status.

In October the same year, the institution was opened for the public and was named Oriental Public Library. In December 1969, an Act of Parliament declared the library an institution of national importance and from 1970, the library has been governed as an autonomous institution by a Board.

Rising above the traditional concept of a library, Khuda

Bakhsh Library has become a centre for acquisition of knowledge and a hub of academic activities. Of course its yearly international seminars, based on national and international topics, have been, successfully, creating research based awareness of things, says the assistant director.

The library has a scheme of acquiring copies of rare manuscripts, available in other collections. So far, the library has 21,000 manuscripts, 2.25 lakh title of books, CD-ROM, video cassettes besides microfilms. In addition to these collections, the library has 35,000 Urdu books and magazines of historical importance. There are also collections of Mazhar Imam, Mazhar Jamal and Zakaria Sharif.

The library has certain materials which cannot be found anywhere in the world, claims the assistant director. It is the proud possessor of the copy of *Tarikh-e-Khandan-e-Taimuria*, which contains 132 paintings and autograph note of the emperor Shahjahan. A copy of *Badshahnama* in two volumes is also with the library, which carries the signatures of George V and the Queen. *Jahangirnama*, which was composed in the year 1611, and a rare copy of Diwan-i-Hafiz which contains autograph notes of Humayun and Jahangir, are also with the library, Ahmad claims.

Collections of Aligarh, Rampur, Bhagalpur, Maner, Phulwarisharif, Asafiya and Asiatic Society have been combed. The British collection of India Office and Cambridge has also been covered and microfilms have been acquired from several places. The library is also having a collection of audio and video cassettes of the works of renowned writers, poets and high priests of the Ganga-Jamni culture of India. Mass Communication Research Centre and Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, have been extending all co-operation to the library in serving the cause of knowledge. The library had, till 1995, added 71 audio and 55 video cassettes to its collection bringing the total to 842 and 547 respectively.

The library has been helping the scholars by providing them with the Xerox materials according to their requirements. Microfilm prints of 49 manuscripts and Xerox copies of 147 printed books have been provided to various institutions and research scholars.

For better management, the library has been divided into separate wings — reference room, reading room, publication department, computer section and binding section manned by 64 employees.

On an average, not fewer than 300 persons visit the Curzon Reading Room daily. The reading room runs in two shifts.

Suraj, a regular visitor to the reading room, says that there are adequate books in the library to take care of the requirements of the readers. "There is no dearth of competitive magazines in the library," he added.

Another student, Manish Kumar, a graduate from Patna University, echoed similar opinion. "There is proper academic environment here, which is rarely found in other libraries of the State capital," he pointed out and added that this library alone could meet the needs of the student community after the closure of British Library.

The reference section is overcrowded with educationists and scholars, from all over the country and abroad. Father Paul

Jackson of Australia is a regular visitor. He has done a lot of works on *Maktubat-e-Sadi* of Makhdum Yahya Maneri.

In the opinion of Asrar Jamayee, a Delhi-based scholar, this library is unparalleled in the entire world. It has a rich collection of Persian books, which cannot be found in any other library across the world. "This is the only reason why this institution attracts foreign scholars," he pointed out. He, however, lamented that the library charges more for photostat copies. It was a costly affair in comparison with other libraries, he pointed out.

Dr. Ahmed Yusuf, who has been visiting the library since early 50s, is of the opinion that there should be more space to accommodate books as well as the readers.

The library staff disclosed that construction of a six-storied near building has been sanctioned. The work could not be started due to some technical problems.

To implement the suggestions of scholar-statesmen, Lord Curzon, Jawaharlal Nehru and Zakir Husain, who visited the library in 1903, 1953 and 1957 respectively, to reproduce the rarities of the library through the latest available techniques and make them available to the scholars at large, the library has been bringing out a quarterly research journal since 1977 which has been introducing the rare material.

The publication section came out with 24 books in Hindi, Urdu, Arabic and Persian last year. It got its own website in 2000. The library also has e-mail facility.

The library has been using new techniques of book preservation to save age-old manuscripts. During the year

1995, 177 manuscripts and 1047 printed books were repaired and bound by trained binders. Ninety manuscripts containing 6169 folios were repaired and bound on contract basis while 1047 printed books and 87 manuscripts were repaired and bound by library's regular binders. Besides, 15,681 printed books and manuscripts were fumigated and given scientific treatment for better and longer life.

Under a long-term project, the library has been making attempts since 1977 to bring out critical editions of the rare materials preserved in the institution, so that distant scholars benefit equally and share the valuable human heritage so painstakingly preserved by Khuda Bakhsh and his successors. Critical editions of *Shamsul Bayan fi Mustalahat-il-Hindustan*, *Suhuf-e-Ibrahim*, *Khulasatul Kalam*, *Bagh-i-Ma'ani* and *Majma'un Nafais*, *Masnavi Taswir-e-Mahabbat*, *Qata'at-e-Hasrat*, *Farhang-e-Zufan-e-Guya*, *Ek Nadir Roznamcha* and many others have been brought out by the library.

Finding a dearth of experts in the field of oriental librarianship and manuscriptology and feeling a thirst for knowledge and instruction in the discipline, the library, well-equipped with the instructors as also the laboratory, started in 1989 a special course of Associate in Oriental Librarianship. The subjects of the course, in brief, are Islamic studies, medieval and modern Indian history and information science (including automation). The languages covered under the course include English, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Bangla and Malyalam. The course is of one-year duration. So far, three batches have successfully completed the course.

The library, besides its traditional activities, has instituted a prestigious award, known as Khuda Bakhsh

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Under a long-term project, the library has been making attempts since 1977 to bring out critical editions of the rare materials preserved in the institution, so that distant scholars benefit equally and share the valuable human heritage so painstakingly preserved by Khuda Bakhsh and his successors. Critical editions of *Shamsul Bayan fi Mustalahat-il-Hindustan*, *Suhuf-e-Ibrahim*, *Khulasatul Kalam*, *Bagh-i-Ma'ani* and *Majma'un Nafais*, *Masnavi Taswir-e-Mahabbat*, *Qata'at-e-Hasrat*, *Farhang-e-Zufan-e-Guya*, *Ek Nadir Roznamcha* and many others have been brought out by the library.

Finding a dearth of experts in the field of oriental librarianship and manuscriptology and feeling a thirst for knowledge and instruction in the discipline, the library, well-equipped with the instructors as also the laboratory, started in 1989 a special course of Associate in Oriental Librarianship. The subjects of the course, in brief, are Islamic studies, medieval and modern Indian history and information science (including automation). The languages covered under the course include English, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Bangla and Malyalam. The course is of one-year duration. So far, three batches have successfully completed the course.

The library, besides its traditional activities, has instituted a prestigious award, known as Khuda Bakhsh

Award. It is given to an outstanding scholar for original and creative work on the subjects in which the library specialises. The awardee is selected by the Khuda Bakhsh Library Board on the recommendation of a high-powered Award Committee constituted by the Board for the purpose.

The institution is being managed by an 11 member committee with the Governor as the ex-officio Chairman. The library receives fund from the Union Government (Department of Culture) as well as the State Government.

The annual budget of the library is of the order of approximately Rs.2 crore and is cleared by the central Government. The budget for the year 2002-2003 is Rs.1.91 crore, disclosed the library officials. The library spends about Rs.15 lakh on the purchase of books alone every year, sources revealed.

Courtesy : Hindustan Times, Patna, 28/11/2002

Old Word Charm

— *By Shuchi Sinha*

In the Din of Chaotic Traffic and Bustling crowds on a busy commercial street shared, among others, by Patna's main market, General Post Office and the government hospital, the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library stands like an oasis of calm. Dappled green lawns border cool, quiet rooms where the scholarly pore over books and manuscripts in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Hindi and English. But it's not just the vast variety of the collection — its antiquity makes this library an internationally acclaimed research powerhouse for students of Islamic and Asian history.

Khuda Bakhsh Library is distinguished from others of its kind by the rare manuscripts on philosophy, society and the sciences preserved from the annals of medieval history. As its director, M. Ziauddin Ansari, explains, India has four major libraries that specialize in historic Islamic texts — Aligarh Muslim University's Maulana Azad Library, Salar Jung Museum's Library in Hyderabad and Raza Library at Rampur in Uttar Pradesh apart from Khuda Bakhsh, which has the largest collection of original manuscripts — about 21,000. The oldest are more than 1,000 years old and include a richly illustrated botanical guide dating back to the 6th century.

More celebrated are the manuscripts of the Mughal period such as the *Tarikh-e-Khandan-e-Timuriya* (a history of the Timur dynasty) commissioned by Akbar, enlivened by 114 paintings. The oldest extant copy of the memoirs of Jahagir, the *Jahangir Nama* authenticated with the signature of King George V, holds pride of place, as does a unique copy of the

Diwan-i-Hafiz Shirazi bearing autographs and personal writings of Humayun and Jahangir. Illustrated translations of the Hindu epics and the *Bhagvad Gita* in elegant calligraphy produced for the Mughal emperors stand as lasting proof of the universality of Indian culture.

Fittingly, the library holds regular seminars to highlight this cultural unity at a time when communal consciousness and hostility are becoming an unfortunate fact of Indian life (there was an attempt by a section of the local media early this year to insinuate suspicious links with a Pakistani trust, a controversy that subsided quickly). The library recently brought out a series of Khuda Bakhsh Lectures in a book titled *Secularism in India*. Membership is open to anyone interested, though initially a six-month temporary membership is granted to see if the member has a genuine interest and can handle the books carefully. Its works, already available on microfilm, are being digitized to make them available on the Internet.

Its manuscripts apart, the library too has an interesting history. It was founded in 1891 by Khuda Bakhsh Khan, an eminent lawyer who went on to become chief justice of the then state of Hyderabad. He inherited about 1,400 rare manuscripts from his father Mohammad Bakhsh, also a lawyer, who had a passion for what was quaintly termed "Oriental studies", broadly covering the history, literature, philosophy and sciences of the East, particularly the Islamic diaspora. Khuda Bakhsh's efforts expanded the collection exponentially as did donations from other collectors of rare books. The honorary post that a Khuda Bakhsh family member occupies on the 12-member administrative board now lies empty as the case to decide on the present heir is in court. The library was termed an "institution of national importance" by an Act of Parliament in 1969, making it an autonomous body. Says

Ansari: "It's a legacy of pride for the entire country." And the preservation effort makes the claim difficult to disbelieve. A dedicated laboratory and staff undertake the fumigation, deacidification and binding that keep the works from decay. The sheen of the gold leaf pages, the vibrancy of the colours reds, greens, blues, browns — and the velvety black sweep of the calligraphy belie the antiquity of these texts, turning back, quite literally, the pages of history.

The library's guest book too gives a sense of history — all the well-known names of India's colonial and post-colonial past are here. Viceroys and governors-general aplenty: the Lords Elgin, Curzon, Hardinge, Irwin, Linlithgow, Wavell and Mountbatten grace its pages. Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Zakir Hussain and numerous Indian presidents came visiting and left in happy awe. Nobel laureates Rabindranath Tagore and were here too, as was physicist J. C. Bose. Raman's words make for the most fitting post-script to the Khuda Bakhsh story. Remarking that calling the library a subject of national pride was a "mere truism", he says, "I would rather like to see that pride translated into action and all support given to the efforts to maintain it." More than just a quotable quote, obviously.

Courtesy India Today, April 22, 2002.

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I had long heard of the Khuda Bakhsh Library and I knew that it was a very fine collection. It was only this morning that I first visited it and saw some of its treasures. I found them even more remarkable than I had expected – and I had expected much. It was a rare delight to see these beautiful works of art, which enshrine a period of India's history. They deserve the most careful and loving attention. I should like to see them reproduced by the latest technique, so that others can see them and share in this joy.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Nov. 1. 1953